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# NOCTURNAL VISIT,

A TALE.

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BY MARIA REGINA ROCHE,

AUTHOR OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ABBEY, MAID OF  
THE HAMLET, VICAR OF LANSDOWNE, AND  
CLERMONT.

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"Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,  
"That I will speak to thee."

SHAKSPEARE.

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VOL. III.

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# NOCTURNAL VISIT.

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## CHAP. I

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“ His tongue  
“ Dropp'd manna, and could make the worse appear  
“ The better reason, to perplex and dash  
“ Maturest counsels ; for his thoughts were low,  
“ To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds  
“ Tim'rous and slothful ; yet he pleas'd the ear.”

MILTON.

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“ **THE** relation I am about giving you,” said Mrs. Decourcy, after remaining some minutes in a thoughtful attitude, as if to recal past events to her recollection, “ I must preface with some account of myself ; else many circumstances would still remain unexplained to you. But in touching upon my own story, I shall endeavour to be brief, in order to avoid exercising your patience too severely.

“ The knowledge which you have acquired of my family, by your residing with my brother, renders it unnecessary for me to speak of it, or to relate the misfortunes in consequence of which, at the age of seventeen, the period I lost my father, I was totally deprived of provision. My brother's situation was as destitute as mine. The disappointments which rendered it so, you are

acquainted with ; and all he could do for me, was to endeavour to procure me an asylum in the house of a family connected with ours, who had received many favours from our departed parent, which my brother flattered himself they would be happy to have an opportunity of requiting, by extending their protection to his orphan daughter.

“ But in thinking so, in judging of them by his own feelings, which he did, he was utterly mistaken. Mr. and Mrs. Cresfield had neither hearts to feel, nor to return kindness. 'Tis true they granted his request, but it was ostentation, not gratitude or sensibility, which prompted them to do so.

“ Ignorant, however, at that period, of their real dispositions, he entrusted me to their care, in full confidence of my receiving from them every attention which could soften the remembrance of past sorrows, and give me spirits to support my present situation. My own hopes were equally sanguine, for I was then as unacquainted as he was with the principles which governed them. I had not been long, however, under their protection, ere they were completely unfolded to my view ; and I perceived, that it was not a wish to serve me, but to obtain a character for benevolence, which had induced them to befriend me.

“ Their family consisted of three daughters, who, in my prosperous days, had professed a tender affection for me....an affection which I had now every reason to believe they never felt. Their cold and altered manners hurt me still more than the cold and altered manners of their parents ; and I wept to find their friendship

“ But a name,  
“ A shade that follow'd wealth or fame,  
“ But left the wretch to weep.”

“ When the first shock of disappointment was over, I determined to try and support my situation with patience and fortitude. Complaints, I knew, could not remedy it; and by comparing it with the situation of others, I endeavoured to reconcile myself to it.

“ Mr. and Mrs. Cresfield resided in Staffordshire, where they owned a noble estate, which had not long, however, been in their possession; and prior to its being so, they had experienced many difficulties which the friendship of my father had not only alleviated, but in a great measure enabled them to overcome. That friendship, however, as well as the afflictions which it had softened, was utterly forgotten. They lived in a continual round of luxury and pleasure, without ever bestowing a thought upon the distresses of their fellow-creatures....distresses, the self-experience of which should at least have taught them to commiserate.

“ In their house I first beheld lord Gwytherin. About the time I became an inmate of it, he had just returned from his travels, and made frequent excursions from Wyefield, where he had taken up his residence, for some months, to visit them.

“ You can better conceive what he was, at the early period I am speaking of, from what he is now, than from any description I could give you....

“ His faultless shape appear'd with ev'ry grace,  
“ While beauty sat triumphant in his face.”

Yet, notwithstanding the mental and personal attractions which he possessed, I should not, per-

haps, have experienced a warmer feeling for him than admiration, had he not distinguished me by the most delicate and insinuating attentions.... attentions which seemed so much to result from a consciousness of my unpleasant situation, and a wish to alleviate it, that they gradually sunk upon my heart, and inspired it with the liveliest tenderness for him.

“Against the progress of a passion, however, which I believed to be hopeless, for to pity, not to love, I ascribed the conduct of lord Gwytherin, I made the most strenuous efforts ; but vain were my attempts to oppose or overcome it, whilst the object who had inspired it, was almost continually before me. Dejected, restless, and apprehensive that every eye would penetrate into the recesses of my heart, I no longer disliked the solitude to which the cold and repulsive manners of Mrs. Cresfield and her daughters had so often before driven me, since it gave me an opportunity of indulging, without restraint, my feelings.

“As I was sitting one evening, absorbed in melancholy meditations, in a little sequestered bower in the garden, whither I had retired from the drawing-room, which was crowded with company, a sudden rustling amidst the surrounding trees alarmed me ; and looking up, I beheld lord Gwytherin. Confused by his unexpected appearance, for in my countenance I feared he could read what was passing in my heart, I started from my seat, and attempted to pass him ; but he prevented me.

‘No,’ cried he, catching my hand, ‘you must not leave me, you must not deny me this opportunity....an opportunity which I have long anxiously sought, for disclosing my sentiments to you.’

“ He gently forced me back as he spoke ; and kneeling before me, avowed a passion not more fervent than honourable....a passion which he protested he had felt almost from the moment he had known me. I leave you to judge of the feelings this avowal excited. Language would be weak to describe them, or the transports he seemed to experience, on drawing from me a confession of my attachment.

‘ How perfect would the happiness of this moment be,’ he exclaimed, ‘ could I immediately unite my fate to yours ; but to do so at present, is out of my power.’

“ He then proceeded to inform me, that he was not yet of age, and that until he was, our union could not take place, as he well knew his guardians would never consent to it ; and entreated me, in order to prevent any disagreeable remonstrances from his friends, not to mention his intentions until they could be carried into execution. Shocked at the idea of his incurring their displeasure on my account, I was, for some minutes, unable to speak ; nor would I give him the promise he desired, until assured, the friends, whose resentment I feared his exciting, had no right to controul his actions. He expressed the greatest satisfaction at receiving it....a satisfaction which I little imagined at the time, I should ever have discovered to proceed from the hopes it gave him, of being able to entangle me completely in his snares.

“ He departed for Wyefield soon after the explanation which had taken place between us, leaving me in a state of greater happiness than, a short period before, I thought I should ever again have experienced.

“ About a week after his departure, as I was wandering one day through some of my favourite haunts, indulging the most agreeable ideas, a country boy came up to me, and putting a sealed paper into my hand, ran off directly. The manner in which it was delivered, threw me into an agitation that scarcely permitted me to stand.... an agitation which was not lessened, when, on opening it, I perceived the signature of lord Gwytherin. He informed me, that he was then concealed in the neighbourhood, whither he had come for the purpose of speaking to me on a most important subject, and entreated me to meet him, about eight in the evening, in a grove of elms, which stood at the extremity of the park.

“ This mysterious billet conjured up a thousand phantoms to distract and affright me. I fancied he was come to tell me we must part; that his friends had greater authority over him than he at first imagined, and had insisted on our separation. From what I have said, you may well believe that the hours which intervened, till the one appointed for our meeting, were passed by me in the most restless anxiety.

“ On reaching the grove, I found him already there. Pale, faint, overpowered by the violence of my emotions, I sunk into his expanded arms, unable to speak, almost to breathe. His transports, his caresses, his impassioned language, by degrees re-animated me; and when I looked in his face, where pleasure alone was visible, all the apprehensions which oppressed me, vanished like mists before the sun.

‘ I am come, my most lovely and beloved girl,’ he said ‘ to put your affection for me to the test. Some very particular and unexpected circumstances, too

tedious here to explain, compel me to go in a very short time to the Continent. How long I may continue there is uncertain, and from that incertitude I cannot support, with any degree of tranquillity, the idea of quitting the kingdom without calling you mine. Consent, therefore, to accompany me immediately to Scotland; and be assured,' added he, observing me extremely agitated by this unexpected proposal, 'I never should have thought, much less asked you to accede to such a measure, could I flatter myself with any hopes of being in the kingdom, or able to return to it, on becoming my own master.'

"My heart seconded his wishes; but a recollection of my father's dying injunction....an injunction which I solemnly vowed to observe, never, whilst I remained unmarried, to take any material step without consulting my brother, opposed my compliance with them.

'Suffer me, my lord,' cried I hesitatingly, 'suffer me to consult my brother.'

'I would,' replied he, 'with pleasure, were I not so situated that it is impossible for me to admit of any delay. And why,' my Isabella, he continued, with all that softness which he knew so well how to assume, 'why desire an event delayed, which, if you love like me, must surely contribute to your happiness as well as mine. The moment our union takes place, your brother shall be acquainted with it. I mean to place you under his protection until I can publicly acknowledge you, and thereby prevent any censure that might otherwise fall upon you, for withdrawing yourself from the protection of your friends: come then, my love, no longer hesitate.' As he spoke he attempted to draw me forward, but I resisted the effort.

‘I cannot, my lord,’ said I, ‘indeed I cannot violate the promise which I gave my father, of consulting my brother upon every important occasion.’

‘I see, I see how it is,’ he exclaimed, in a passionate accent, and relinquishing my hand, ‘you do not love. I am sorry, madam, you did not before undeceive me. Had you sooner done so, I should not have found it so difficult to erase the impression you have made upon me, as I fear I now shall ; but my reason, I hope, in time, will enable me to overcome it.’

‘He walked from me as he spoke, and I imagined he was quitting me forever. I attempted to speak, but passion choaked my utterance. Lord Gwytherin paused, and looked back ; he observed my emotions, and after standing a minute, as if irresolute, he returned.

‘If I have accused you unjustly of indifference,’ he said, ‘as these tears almost make me flatter myself I have, you must blame yourself alone for my having done so. Oh, Isabella ! why inflict unnecessary pain upon yourself and me ? Why hesitate to comply with wishes which spring from the tenderest affection ?’

‘He saw, by my looks, that the hesitation was over ; and catching me in his arms, he conveyed me to a chaise, which waited at a little distance from the grove, and which drove off the moment we were seated in it.

‘He now exerted all his eloquence to calm my perturbation, and reconcile me to myself ; assuring me, that the sudden exigency of the case fully acquitted me of any breach of duty to my departed father.

“ We travelled several hours without interruption; at length the carriage stopped, and glancing from the window, I perceived we were before a spacious mansion, surrounded, as well as I could discern by the imperfect light which the night afforded, by extensive plantations.

‘ Surely, my lord,’ said I, somewhat surprised, ‘ this cannot be an inn ?’

‘ No,’ replied he, ‘ it is a mansion over which your power will be as sovereign as over my heart.’

“ The shock I received on hearing I was brought to his house, cannot be described. The glaring impropriety of such a measure in my present situation, overwhelmed me with confusion and dismay.

“ But ere I could express the feelings it excited, the carriage-door was opened, and I was lifted from it, and conducted by lord Gwytherin into a magnificent parlour, lit up in such a manner as convinced me he was expected.

‘ Oh, my lord !’ I cried, ‘ what have you done... why have you brought me hither ?’

“ He could not avoid doing so, he said, as he had some affairs to settle ere he pursued his journey to Scotland ; but begged me to compose my spirits, as it would be resumed early the next morning.

“ Regardless of what he said, I insisted upon being conducted to some inn in the neighbourhood ; but he peremptorily refused to let me leave his house, and reproached me for harbouring doubts of his honour, which alone, he was convinced, could have made me desire to quit it.

‘ No, my lord,’ I replied, ‘ I do not doubt your honour ; if I did so now, I should be the most wretched of women : but neither your honour nor my innocence can, in despite of appearances, prevent your domestics from forming unpleasant surmises respecting me.’

‘ Oh, if your objection,’ he said, ‘ to remaining here, merely proceeds from the cause you have mentioned, I can easily obviate it ; the manner in which we are situated with respect to each other, is known to my family, and also the reason of our coming hither.’

“ He tried to calm my agitation, and reconcile me to my situation ; but he could not succeed in doing either. I felt restless and dissatisfied ; and entreated him to permit his housekeeper, or some respectable female belonging to his family, to be brought in, to give, by her presence, some kind of sanction to it: but with this entreaty he would not comply, and appeared so offended by it, that I feared to repeat it. An elegant supper was served up, and he became all life and gaiety. The moment the things were removed, I expressed a wish, but to no purpose, to retire.

“ He drew a chair close to mine, and from the most ardent professions of affection.....professions to which I listened with a pleasure that was too evident, he gradually began to converse in a style which both alarmed and surprised me. Almost in the words of Eloisa, he declared that love could never exist for any time, but in a state of perfect freedom ; and that the gratitude with which a woman, who reposed unlimited confidence in his honour, must inspire a generous man, would bind him more firmly to her than any human ties whatsoever.

‘ Could I believe you were now speaking your real sentiments, my lord,’ said I, at length interrupting him, ‘ I should be wretched indeed.’

“ My looks corroborated the truth of this assertion ; and lord Gwytherin, perceiving the agitation into which he had thrown me, and fearful of having

awakened suspicions which might put me on my guard against his further artifices, immediately changed the conversation, which he protested was merely introduced for the purpose of trying what effect it would have upon me.

“He now talked with rapture of the joys of wedded love, and entirely dispelled the uneasiness which his railing against it, but a minute before, had created. But though the subject on which he was conversing was delightful to me, I could not forget that propriety demanded my leaving him. All my efforts for doing so, however, were ineffectual; and at length, clasping me to his bosom, he asked why I should wish to quit him, since he already considered me as his wife? I gazed on him a minute in silence, without comprehending his meaning; but when he ventured to explain it.... when he ventured to unfold his wishes and designs, I burst from his arms with mingled horror and indignation.

‘Oh, my lord!’ I cried, in an agony which scarcely allowed me to be articulate, ‘is this the delicacy, is this the honour I had a right to expect from you? Have you then imposed upon my credulity? Tell me, tell me,’ I continued, opposing his efforts to speak, ‘what are your real intentions respecting me? Do not attempt any longer to deceive either yourself or me with false hopes; for, before that Heaven, which, I trust, will ever protect me from any snares that may be laid for me, I swear, never willingly to commit an error.’

‘My intentions respecting you are what they always were,’ he replied.

“This evasive answer did not satisfy me. ‘Be more explicit, my lord,’ I cried, with increasing agitation.

‘ They are honourable then,’ said he, and again attempted to fold me to his bosom ; but I shrunk from him.

‘ If you do not wish to make me doubt the truth of this assertion, my lord,’ I said, ‘ you will not persevere in treating me in this manner, nor any longer detain me.’

‘ Only till I have obtained your forgiveness,’ he replied, ‘ for the unintentional offence I have given you...an offence, which if you loved like me, you would easily pardon.’

“ He knelt at my feet, and conjured me not to leave him in displeasure ; solemnly assuring me, by an early hour in the morning every thing should be ready for resuming our journey, as he was impatient to prove that his intentions were never otherwise than honourable towards me.

“ Again persuaded by his sincerity, I granted the pardon he solicited, and a servant was then summoned to conduct me to my chamber. I dismissed her upon entering it, and having secured the door, I flung myself upon a chair, too much agitated to think of retiring to rest. As I sat, revolving the conduct of lord Gwytherin, which alternately excited hope and fear, I was suddenly startled by a low noise, apparently within the chamber. Trembling, I looked towards the spot whence it proceeded, and perceived a door, which I had not before observed, half open. I instantly flew to the one which communicated with the gallery ; but ere I could unlock it, the other was thrown open, and an elderly woman entered the room. I shrieked involuntarily on seeing her. ‘ Do not be alarmed,’ cried she ; ‘ I am come, not to injure, but to serve you.’

“ She approached me, and taking my hand, reconducted me to a seat.

‘Explain,’ said I, in faltering accents, ‘the meaning of your words; they have conjured up the most horrible ideas in my mind. Tell me, tell me, are my apprehensions just? Is lord Gwytherin a.....’

‘Villain!’ exclaimed the stranger; ‘yes, too surely; and if you wish to preserve that innocence which I imagine you possess, you will fly his house, to which you have been allured for the vilest purposes!’

‘You, I am sure, my dearest Jacintha, can better conceive than I can describe, what my feelings were at this moment. The human heart, indeed, I believe, cannot experience a greater pang, than what is inflicted by finding its confidence and affection misplaced.

‘The good woman proceeded to inform me, that she acted in the capacity of house-keeper in the castle; and that she had discovered lord Gwytherin’s designs against me, by means of a confidential servant, unworthy indeed of the appellation, whom she overheard disclosing them to another domestic.

‘His lordship discovering, through his conversations with me at Mr. Cresfield’s, that he could never hope to succeed in his intentions if he at once avowed them, used all the art he was master of to make me believe them honourable, and draw me into his power. On bringing me to his mansion, it was his intention first to try and overcome my principles by arguments and flattery; and if these failed, to represent the irreparable injury I had done my character, by flying with him from the protection under which I had been placed, and by convincing me, that the world would give no credit to my asseverations of innocence, tempt me to lose it in reality.

‘Such, madam,’ continued this worthy woman, ‘was the project of my lord; happy do I feel at having discovered and defeated it.’

‘I am punished, I am properly punished,’ cried I, throwing myself upon the ground, in an agony, ‘for breaking my promise to my dying father. Oh God!’ I continued, ‘suffer my remorse to palliate my fault; forgive me, and extend thy protection to me!’

“Mrs. Seymour, who had acted the part of a guardian angel to me, raised, and endeavoured to comfort me; but I interrupted her efforts.

‘You know not,’ I wildly exclaimed, ‘the horrors of my situation. I have no home, no friend to receive me; and my reputation is gone, I fear, forever.’

‘No,’ replied Mrs. Seymour, ‘future propriety will do much towards retrieving it; and be assured, I shall ever be ready to vindicate it; and I flatter myself my evidence would not be disregarded.’

‘But where am I to look for a shelter?’ I exclaimed.

‘If you have no objection,’ she said, ‘to quitting the kingdom, I think I can procure you an asylum, perhaps not less pleasant than the one from which lord Gwytherin withdrew you.’

“All places, I replied, were alike to the unhappy.

“She then informed me, that a young lady, well known to her, and who she knew would grant any request she made, had, on her way from London to her family in Ireland, stopped, the preceding day, at an inn near Wyefield, where a slight indisposition still detained her. To her she said she would send me, with such a letter as, she was

convinced, would procure me her friendship and protection.

“ I blessed her for her kindness ; but though the distraction of my mind was somewhat relieved by it, nothing could lessen the anguish I felt at the perfidy of lord Gwytherin ; and notwithstanding my resentment and indignation at the injuries he had meditated against me, I wept involuntarily at the idea of our eternal separation.”

“ I can well, indeed,” said Jacintha, “ conceive what you must have felt.”

Mrs. Decourcy paused for several minutes, and then resumed her narrative, as follows :

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CHAP. II.

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“ What have I done, ye pow’rs ! what have I done,  
“ To see my youth, my beauty, and my love,  
“ No sooner gain’d, but slighted and betray’d ;  
“ And like a rose, just gather’d from the stalk,  
“ But only smelt, and cheaply thrown aside,  
“ To wither on the ground ?”

DRYDEN.

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“ MRS. SEYMOUR continued with me the short remainder of the night, part of which she employed in writing the introductory letter she had promised ; and early in the morning, ere any of the rest of the family had risen, she consigned me to the care of a servant, in whom she could confide, to be conveyed by him to the inn where miss Decourcy lodged.

“ She was up by the time we reached it. The letter was taken to her by the woman of the house, and I remained below till I received a summons to attend her. Language is inadequate to give you any just idea of the admiration I felt on beholding her. To all the charms of early youth, and youth, as an author\* has observed, itself is beauty, she united the most attractive charms of face and person, and was altogether one of the most lovely creatures I had ever seen. She as-

\* P. Thicknesse.

sured me, she should be happy to render me every service in her power ; and promised me the protection of her grandmother, with whom she resided. Perceiving me pale, trembling, and agitated, she insisted on my retiring to a chamber immediately after breakfast. To sleep, I found impossible ; but though I could not do so, I gladly continued in the room several hours, in order to try and compose my spirits, and reconcile myself to the situation into which I was so unexpectedly thrown.

“ On returning to miss Decourcy, I was both shocked and surprised to find her in tears. She started on seeing me, and hastily wiped them away ; but no effort could dispel the melancholy which clouded her countenance. She told me it was her intention to pursue her journey in the evening. Previous to my setting out, I wrote to my brother an account of all that had befallen me ; implored his forgiveness for the rash step I had taken ; entreated him to pass over the conduct of lord Gwytherin in silence, and endeavour to vindicate me in the opinion of Mr. Cresfield’s family.

“ In the course of the day, Mrs. Seymour found means of acquainting me, that I need be under no apprehensions of lord Gwytherin’s pursuing me, as he had not manifested any intention of doing so, though exasperated at my escape, and outrageous with the domestics, whom he suspected of having favoured it.

“ I cannot well describe the emotions this intelligence gave me. It destroyed the hope, that till this instant, had lingered in my heart, of his being touched with compunction for his conduct, and seeking me to make atonement for it ; and I commenced my journey in a state of greater

wretchedness than I had ever before experienced.

“ Miss Decourcy appeared scarcely less unhappy ; and it was evident, the pressure of her own sorrows rendered her unable to attempt administering any consolation to mine. As she drew near her home, however, instead of any longer indulging her dejection, she seemed solicitous to subdue it ; and succeeded tolerably well in the efforts she made for so doing.

“ Her grandmother resided in an ancient mansion in the southern part of Ireland ; not more venerable from its antiquity, than the virtues of those to whom it had, and still belonged. Hospitality and benevolence dwelt within it ; and the poor and wayfaring hailed with tears of ecstasy, the mossy towers of Carric Owen, assured, on reaching them, of receiving the comfort and assistance they required.

“ The old lady confirmed the promise her grand-daughter had made me of her protection. With the particulars of my unhappy story, she was not acquainted. She was merely informed that I was a deserted orphan, whom Mrs. Seymour had recommended as a person well qualified to be her companion ; and with such a person she had long been solicitous of meeting, as her grand-daughter went out a great deal, and she then required some one to amuse her lonely hours.

“ In her peaceful habitation my mind gradually recovered its lost tranquillity. The remembrance of past scenes could not, 'tis true, be obliterated from it ; but it was a remembrance which ceased, by degrees, to afflict.

“ With regret and surprise I perceived, that miss Decourcy had not long returned to her native home, ere she became again as dejected as

before. She no longer sought society nor amusement, as I was informed she had heretofore done ; on the contrary, she sedulously avoided both, and passed hours in the solitude of her chamber. Though her grandmother had attained a period of life, which prevented her from being very quick in her discernment, a change so great in a being she adored, could not escape her notice, nor fail of distressing her ; and she frequently asked me, with tears, whether I could tell her, or even suspected the cause of her beloved Alice's melancholy.

“ That I suspected it, was most certain, though I did not acknowledge so to her. It was, indeed, almost evident to me, that the thorn which rankled in the bosom of miss Decourcy, was implanted there by disappointed love, and that time and reason could alone extract it.

“ Four months passed away unmarked by any occurrence. At the expiration of this period, the venerable Mrs. Decourcy was taken from this world to a better one. Her death was sudden ; and never, I think, could these beautiful lines of Lee have been more applicable than to her :

“ Of no distemper, of no blast she dy'd ;  
“ But fell, like autumn fruit that mellow'd long,  
“ Ev'n wondered at, because she dropt no sooner.  
“ Fate seem'd to wind her up for four-score years,  
“ Yet freshly ran she on ten winters more ;  
“ Till, like a clock, worn out with eating time,  
“ The wheels of weary life at last stood still.”

“ This event gave miss Decourcy a pretext for indulging, without restraint, or any fears of exciting unpleasant remarks, the anguish of her heart. All the efforts that were made to draw her from Carric Owen were ineffectual ; nor did she

detain any of the numerous friends and relatives of her departed parent, who attended the funeral obsequies, beyond the hour they were over.

“ But though she shunned an intercourse with society, she no longer avoided my company. On the contrary, she appeared to derive a melancholy kind of pleasure from wandering with me about the romantic scenes surrounding her habitation... scenes, the wildness and solemnity of which suited her feelings ; and, by being congenial to, were well calculated to sooth them.

“ The mansion was situated upon the coast. High and beetling cliffs, which extended in a wild series of rocks to a considerable distance, defended it from the fury of the waves ; and immediately at its rear rose a hill, or rather mountain, wooded to the top, and which equally sheltered it from the fury of the winds. Amidst its hanging shades, a variety of wildly devious walks were cut, which commanded the most enchanting and extensive prospects. But no description I could give, could convey any just idea of the beauties of this place, though the impression they made upon my mind is not by any means effaced. I still, with enthusiastic delight, retrace in imagination my favourite haunts about it.....still wander upon the sea-beat shore, where the rocks, rising in the form of an amphitheatre, exhibit a romantic scenery, with which the eye can never be tired, and explore their deep recesses, bestrewed with shells, and hung with weeds and plants of the most vivid colours.

“ I often imagined, in our lonely rambles, miss Decourcy seemed inclined to unburden the sorrows of her heart ; a fear, however, of being mistaken, as well as a fear of offending, prevented

me from appearing to think so. There was, indeed, a reserve, or, more properly speaking, a haughtiness in her disposition and manner, which checked the advances of friendship, and still kept at an humble distance those whom Fortune had placed beneath her.

“ But at length the smothered anguish of her heart burst forth. Deeply engaged in conversation one evening about past events, we heedlessly strayed towards the summit of a cliff which impended over the sea, and found ourselves upon its edge ere we well knew where we were. The moment I perceived our danger, I recoiled with horror, dragging my companion after me.

‘ Why so alarmed, Isabella?’ said miss Decourcy, after pausing for some minutes, as we rested against a fragment of the cliff; ‘ you have stood upon the edge of a much more tremendous precipice than this.’

‘ Yes,’ I replied, perfectly comprehending her meaning, ‘ and blessed be the guardian hand which snatched me from it!’

‘ Blessed, indeed!’ she exclaimed, in a kind of inward voice; ‘ thou wert the peculiar care of heaven; but I.....’ She paused, and looking at me with a wildness which appalled me, clasped her hands together, and burst into tears. ‘ O Isabella!’ she continued, as I vainly attempted to sooth her, ‘ I am too wretched to receive consolation. I am lost, I am .....what thou mightest have been,’ she cried, with increasing wildness, ‘ but for the intervention of thy guardian angel!’

‘ You terrify me!’ said I, involuntarily.

‘ Isabella,’ she proceeded, ‘ I have almost gone too far to recede, nor do I desire to do so. The fatal secret, lodged within my bosom, must be dis-

closed to some one, and to no one would I so soon divulge it as to you ; but ere I do so, you must swear to preserve it inviolable.'

' I gave her the solemn assurances of secrecy she desired ; and seating ourselves upon the cliff, she gave me the following narrative, as soon as her agitation had somewhat subsided.

' Ere I touch upon the case of my sorrows,' she began, ' I must relate a few particulars concerning my family. My father, the heir of Carric Owen, was twice married. He wedded his first lady more in obedience to the will of his father, than from inclination. She was an English woman, of a proud and imperious spirit, and but ill qualified to promote domestic happiness...the happiness he was most attached to ; consequently his regret upon her decease, which took place soon after the death of his father, was not very poignant.

' His second lady was the choice of his own heart ; and his expectations of enjoying felicity with her were never disappointed. The friends of his departed lady were highly exasperated at this second marriage ; and either were, or pretended to be, so apprehensive that the children she left might be neglected in consequence of it, that they entreated to have them committed to their care...an entreaty which my father complied with. They were accordingly sent to England, where, in the course of time, they were advantageously married.

' By this second union, my father had two daughters, the youngest of whom I am, and a son. Whilst we were infants, he and my mother died ; and the whole care of us devolved upon his surviving parent, who, though then far advanced in

years, proved herself well qualified for the trust reposed in her.

‘ She was not, however, rewarded for her attentions by beholding us all in the possession of that happiness she wished us to enjoy. An unfortunate attachment clouded the early prospects of my sister, and a still more unfortunate one overwhelmed me with despair. My sister, in consequence of the circumstance I have just mentioned, insisted on being permitted to retire to a convent, and about the period she quitted Carric Owen, my brother was sent abroad to complete his education; so that I alone remained with my grandmother, the sole object for the exercise of that excessive tenderness she had always manifested for the offspring of her son. Her partiality for me, in particular, she carried almost to a fault, since it rendered her unwilling to correct, and too ready to bestow praise.

‘ Soon after the departure of my brother and sister, I was invited by a relation to London; an invitation my grandmother gladly allowed me to accept, from an idea of the advantages which might accrue to me from going thither. She thought, in short, I could not fail of making a splendid conquest there. My expectations (I will confess my vanity) were not less sanguine than her’s, and I delighted in indulging them, for my disposition is ambitious.

‘ The house of my relation was the resort of the gay and fashionable; and lord Gwytherin was a constant visiter. He soon distinguished me by the particularity of his attentions, which, from what I have said; you may believe afforded me the greatest pleasure; and ere long, he insinuated himself so completely into my affections, that, not-

withstanding my ambition, the splendid situation to which he could exalt me, by making me his wife, was but a secondary consideration with me for wishing him to do so. Neither I nor my friends entertained a doubt of his intentions being strictly honourable; consequently, he had every opportunity he could desire of being with me.

‘These opportunities he turned to the basest purpose. He led me to believe, where there was real love, there should be unlimited confidence; and hinted from time to time, it was his fixed determination never to marry any woman, who did not place the greatest security in his honour. In short.....’

“Here,” proceeded Mrs. Decourcy, “her rising agonies for a considerable time impeded her utterance; at length, raising her head from my shoulder, against which she had leaned it, she exclaimed, ‘Oh Isabella! let tears and burning blushes speak the rest.’

‘Scarcely had he triumphed over what was dearer to me than life...my honour; scarcely had he degraded me in my own eyes, and rendered existence a burden, ere he ceased entirely to see me. I wrote to him the most importunate letters, remonstrating on the barbarity of his conduct, but to no effect: he preserved an inflexible silence. Maddened, at length, almost to desperation, I resolved on obtaining an interview with him, and compelling him to terminate, at least, the horrors of incertitude; for still a lingering hope remained within my heart, that he yet meant to act honourably by me.

‘At the time I formed the resolution of seeing him, I discovered he was at his seat at Wyefield. I doubted not I could easily procure an interview

with him through means of Mrs. Seymour, whom I knew almost from the period of my existence, and who, in consequence of the distressed situation she had been left in by her husband, a clergyman, was recommended to the situation she now filled in lord Gwytherin's family, by the lady with whom I resided in London.

‘ On reaching the inn in which you found me, I feigned indisposition, in order to have a pretext for continuing, if expedient, some days at it; and, sending for Mrs. Seymour, I gave her a disguised account of the conduct of lord Gwytherin, pretending that I merely wished to see him, for the purpose of obtaining from him some letters which he had received from me, under a supposition of his being serious in his addresses.

‘ She promised to favour my wishes to the utmost of her power; but destroyed all the pleasure this promise gave, by informing me that lord Gwytherin was, at this very time, engaged in pursuit of a new object. The despair and distraction caused by this intelligence, can better be conceived than described; but though the emotions I betrayed convinced her of my attachment for him, I am happy to think, from her manner, they created no suspicions of the real cause of them.

‘ The very night of the day on which I saw her, you were brought to the castle; and Mrs. Seymour, fancying, from what I said, that you were the only obstacle to my happiness, determined, if possible, to remove you from lord Gwytherin. But do not imagine, in wishing to do so, she was actuated by no other motive; exclusive of any considerations about me, she felt truly solicitous, and would have done all in her power to

have saved you from the destruction she saw impending over you.

‘ The morning on which you came to me, I met Mrs. Seymour at a little distance from the inn; and was conducted by her through private paths, to the castle, where I obtained the so long desired interview with lord Gwytherin. I found him....but let me not dwell on what, but to think on, almost maddens my brain; suffice it to say, I found his heart was a total stranger to any thing like humanity or virtue. He reproached me.... yes, he had the insolence to reproach me for being instrumental to your escape. I gloried in acknowledging I was; and assured him, that all attempts to allure you again into his power, would be ineffectual, as you were now thoroughly acquainted with his artifices and designs. The truth of this assertion, I suppose, he did not doubt, by never having made an effort to regain you. I left him with a contempt and indignation, which time has rather increased than diminished, and which have completely destroyed every tender sentiment I felt for him; and, but for one circumstance, were he now to offer me his hand, I should reject it with abhorrence.’

“ She wept, she blushed,” continued Mrs. Decourcy, “ and rendered by her agitation any explanation of her words unnecessary.”

‘ Thus,’ said she, ‘ have I disclosed to you the source of that anguish which has so long oppressed me....an anguish beneath which nothing could have supported me, but the idea of the cause of it being utterly unknown. Were it to transpire, I never could survive the discovery. Never would I live to experience scorn and neglect. Never would I live to find myself sunk to a level with

the most degraded of my sex. Never would I live to suffer the vain, the arrogant, and malicious, to triumph over me !

‘ Amongst my own family are some who would enjoy such a triumph. The too great partiality of my grandmother created me many enemies, and my two eldest sisters, particularly, would rejoice at my fall. But I trust they never will have an opportunity. I have used such caution, and made such arrangements, that it is almost impossible my unhappy situation should be discovered : and that lord Gwytherin will ever expose me to the contempt of the world, I have no apprehension ; for he is more anxious to conceal, than to glory in his vices, well convinced, that to avow them, would put those upon their guard whom he might wish to deceive.’

“ She then proceeded to inform me it was her intention never to let lord Gwytherin know any thing respecting her child ; and acquainted me with the retreat to which she meant to retire, when it should be necessary to withdraw from public observation. This was an ancient castle, near the celebrated lakes of Killarney. It had long been in possession of her family ; but, notwithstanding the beauty of its situation, had for many years been deserted by its possessors, in consequence of some dark and dreadful transactions which had taken place within it. But though a superstitious prejudice prevented any of the family from inhabiting it, they were too proud of this record of their greatness, to permit it to fall into utter decay. They accordingly kept a few domestics in it, the principal of whom was miss Decourcy’s nurse, in whom, as in me, she meant to repose unlimited confidence.

“ I was to attend her to this neglected dwelling, whence, after continuing in it some days, she was to depart unaccompanied by me, under the pretext of visiting some friends, who resided at a considerable distance from it ; and at night return to a decaying tower, where she meant to seclude herself, until all necessity for confinement should be over. Her whole plan succeeded according to her wishes. At a certain distance from the castle, the chaise in which she travelled was dismissed ; and being met by her nurse, she was conducted to her destined retreat, in which we had contrived to render an apartment tolerably commodious for her, and where she could be under no apprehensions of a discovery ; for this tower, being the scene where all those atrocities had been committed, which inspired such a horror against the building, was most carefully shunned ; as its

“ Mournful chambers held,  
“ So night-struck Fancy dreamt, the yelling ghost,”

“ Though Loughlean castle had suffered considerably by the neglect of its owners, its want of comfort and cheerfulness was amply compensated by its situation ; and I often wondered that taste, as well as reason, had not been able to triumph over superstition and prejudice, since no where, perhaps, could a greater assemblage of beauties have been beheld.

“ It stood upon the borders of one of the most romantic of the lakes, and commanded a view of a magnificent cascade, which, apparently bursting through a dark arch of wood, picturesque in the extreme, fell, with a noise truly appalling, into the lake below.

“ This lake was adorned with islands of matchless beauty. Its enchanting shores were formed into a variety of bays and promontories, crowned with clustering groves, where the myrtle, the arbutus, and the holly, that, amidst all the rigours of winter, retain all the verdure of spring, were conspicuous.

“ Mountains, towering to sublimity, the haunts of the eagle and the cormorant, who here held their unmolested reign, surrounded this lovely scenery, and at once exhibited all the bleakness of desolation, and all the richness of cultivation. The faintest sound within their deep indented caverns awoke a thousand echoes, and almost led one to believe the fabled accounts of invisible beings true.

“ Deprived of the society of miss Decourcy, for except at night I could not attempt to visit her, my principal amusement was derived from wandering about this delightful country. In one of my rambles I accidentally met a large party near the lake, going to embark upon it, amongst whom I was not very agreeably surprised at beholding Mr. Cresfield's eldest daughter, who was then married to an officer, quartered (as I afterwards learned) in the neighbourhood. She surveyed me for a minute with earnestness, and then passed me in silence; and with a look of contempt which wounded me to the heart, and determined me to avoid a second meeting, by confining myself in future within the precincts of the castle.

“ I must here inform you that all my brother's efforts to vindicate my innocence in the opinion of Mr. Cresfield and his family, were ineffectual. They persisted in believing, or pretending to be-

lieve me guilty, and said every thing which malice could suggest to blacken my character. Their enmity against me was imputed by my brother (who himself gave immediate credit to my assertions, and granted the forgiveness I implored for my indiscretion) to their disappointment relative to lord Gwytherin, with whom they had hoped to form an alliance ; which hope they imagined was defeated through my means alone, and consequently could not bring themselves to pardon me.

“ About a week after the seclusion of your mother, you were born, and immediately conveyed by her faithful attendant to a nurse she had provided for you.”

“ Immediately !” repeated Jacintha, with a melancholy look.

“ The unhappy circumstances attending your birth,” replied Mrs. Decourcy, “ prevented her from giving way to that tenderness which, no doubt, she felt for you : but to proceed.

“ I now spent the best part of every night with your mother, in order to relieve her nurse, who found means of visiting the tower in the day-time, though I could not, without danger of detection. In traversing the lonely passages leading to it, I often felt a kind of shuddering awe which cannot be described, frequently imagining I heard strange and mysterious noises in the deserted chambers adjoining them.

“ Returning one night from your mother, I was startled by the sound of steps within one of these chambers. I paused, irresolute whether I should proceed ; but recollecting how often my fancy had before deceived me, and concluding I was again under its influence, I summoned my courage

to my aid, and was advancing, when suddenly the half-closed door of the chamber opened, and by the shadowy light which the moon cast through the arched windows of the gallery, I perceived the figure of a man coming from it, who, at the first glance, I saw was not an inhabitant of the castle. I shrieked aloud, and should have fallen to the ground, had not the stranger sprung forward and caught me in his arms, recalling my fleeting senses at the same moment, by mentioning his name. Language can convey but a faint idea of the surprise I felt, on hearing he was the brother of miss Decourcy ; who, on receiving the intelligence of his grandmother's death, which had reached him at Naples, immediately set out for his native country, contrary to the expectations of his sister, as she imagined he would not think of returning to it, until he had completed the tour of Europe. From Carric Owen, where he was greatly disappointed at not finding her, he had travelled to Loughlean castle, at which place he arrived just as the gates were about being closed for the night, and soon after I had withdrawn from my chamber to that of miss Decourcy's.

“ His unexpected arrival threw the few domestics who were in the castle into such confusion, that on descending with him to the parlour, in order to satisfy his anxious inquiries about his sister, I found them all up ; and one of them threw me, into the utmost consternation, by expressing her astonishment at not being able to find me, when, upon the arrival of her master, she had sought me for the purpose of bringing me to him. This consternation was not a little increased by Mr. Decourcy's informing me it was his intention to set out the next morning for the

residence of his sister, whom he was impatient to behold.

“ Unable to devise any scheme myself for preventing this dreaded measure, I resolved on returning to her in the course of the night, and acquainting her with all which had happened.

“ Accordingly, in pursuance of this resolution, I watched in my chamber until I had reason to suppose the family were at rest; then stealing from it, I proceeded with cautious steps towards the tower, trembling as I passed the chamber of Mr. Decourcy, lest he should again start from it, and struck with the strangeness of finding me again in such a place, insist upon ascertaining the motives which brought me to it; happily, however, I reached the tower without interruption.

“ Miss Decourcy immediately perceived nothing could prevent her brother from persisting in his intention, but her making her appearance in the castle; she accordingly determined on doing so the next morning. Luckily, she was at this time nearly recovered; so that no great apprehensions could be entertained about her putting this unavoidable determination into practice. In pursuance of it, the next day, at an early hour, she quitted her confinement, and by a short and solitary path, in which there was little danger of being seen, again reached the castle. She accounted to the astonished domestics for coming to it in such a manner, by informing them, that the chaise in which she had been travelling, had broken down within a few miles of it, and that, unable to procure another carriage, or even an attendant, she had been compelled to pursue the remainder of her journey alone, and on foot.

“ This fabricated story imposed upon her brother as well as the servants; and not only accounted to

him for her present agitation, but furnished her with a pretext for confining herself a few days to her chamber. From this period she rapidly recovered her health and spirits. The apprehensions which had so long injured both were removed, and she seemed again to look forward to happiness.

“Mr. Decourcy was so delighted with this seat of his ancestors, which he had not before seen, that he resolved on passing some time at it; proper servants, and every thing which could render it an agreeable residence, were accordingly provided. All the families of respectability in the neighbourhood paid their compliments to him and to his sister; and again the voice of mirth resounded through it, and the feast of hospitality was spread within its halls.

“In the course of my visits with miss Decourcy and her brother, I was frequently distressed by meeting Mrs. Ottley, the daughter of Mr. Cresfield, whom I have already mentioned. She behaved to me, upon every occasion, with a supercilious haughtiness, which agitated and embarrassed me, and inspired feelings, prophetic of the unhappiness she was about causing me, by her artifices and malice.

“I had not long been known to Mr. Decourcy, ere he distinguished me by the most particular attentions; which, as time and reason had completely triumphed over my ill-placed passion for lord Gwytherin, I received with pleasure...a pleasure that would have been unalloyed, could I have flattered myself his sister approved of his growing attachment; but that she did not, I had reason to apprehend, more from looks than words however, for she always expressed the sincerest regard for me.

“ His attentions were soon noticed, and spoken of throughout the neighbourhood. The malevolent passions they excited in Mrs. Ottley’s bosom, who could not bear even the remote prospect of my being elevated to independence, at length burst forth into open invectives against me, and provoked her to disclose the imprudence into which the insidious arts of lord Gwytherin had drawn me, but which she ascribed not to his machinations, but my own levity. She hesitated not to declare, that, in consequence of my indiscretion, I had been compelled to seek a temporary retirement, which the humanity of miss Decourcy had afforded me in Loughlean castle ; and that the evidence of my shame was now in the care of a soldier’s wife, belonging to the regiment of her husband.

“ Unfortunately, miss Decourcy’s nurse placed you with this woman (of whom she had obtained an accidental knowledge, and whose child died a short time before you were born), under an idea that there could be less danger of a stranger’s discovering the secret of your birth, than an inhabitant of the neighbourhood.

“ She found means of introducing herself to her ; and having ascertained her readiness to accept the proposal she was about making her, she proceeded to settle all the necessary preliminaries for your reception. She informed her that you were the offspring of a private marriage, which, for many important reasons, it was still necessary to conceal ; that your birth, therefore, must be kept a profound secret ; and that, if faithful to the confidence reposed in her, she should receive a reward adequate to her fidelity.

“ She vowed to observe the most inviolable silence respecting you ; but whether from a suspi-

cion of not having heard the truth, or from what other motive, I cannot possibly ascertain, she did not long hesitate to disclose the secret entrusted to her to Mrs. Ottley, who was her patroness, and had made several inquiries respecting the infant she saw with her.

“ This disclosure, together with the strange circumstance of my being left at the castle by miss Decourcy, which Mrs. Ottley had been at pains to discover, confirmed every injurious suspicion she entertained relative to me ; and, however conscious she might have been of violating humanity by the reports she propagated, she did not by any means think she had violated truth.

“ Ere long they reached the ear for which they were principally intended. Shocked and confounded by what he heard, Mr. Decourcy, who about this time had made serious proposals to me, resolved, after a little deliberation, to acquaint me with the particulars he had heard.

“ You may easily conceive my feelings on hearing them. I acknowledged the imprudence which artifice on one side, and credulity on the other, had led me into ; but I proudly denied the other charges against me, and indignantly inquired whether the conduct of his sister was not a sufficient refutation of them ; who, it was not natural to suppose, would have permitted him to think seriously of me, had I acted in the manner that was represented. But, alas ! her conduct was no corroboration of my innocence. She had manifested a dislike to our union, which her brother had observed, and which was now imputed by him to a very different motive from the real one, particularly as she was prevented, on the present occa-

sion, from being a strenuous advocate in my favour, by the delicacy of her situation.

“ In short, I perceived that nothing could remove the suspicions of Mr. Decourcy, but my candid avowal of your name and lineage, with which he had but too much reason to think I was acquainted; and as it was out of my power to do this, we parted, and Mrs. Ottley fully enjoyed the success of her malicious scheme.

“ In the meantime miss Decourcy, terrified lest her nurse should not be able to evade the interrogatories which she was confident her brother meant to put to her, prevailed upon her to take you from the woman with whom she had placed you, and go to a distant part of the country. The idea of remaining any longer in a place where I was certain I should meet with universal scorn and neglect, was insupportable. Miss Decourcy thereupon left Loughlean castle with me, immediately after her brother's departure, and returned to Carric Owen, sincerely regretting the unhappiness which, through her means, I experienced.

“ Her spirits again declined, and the vivid bloom of youth faded from her cheeks.

“ After a residence of some months at Carric Owen, a neighbouring family, the only one almost with which she now kept up any intercourse, proposed her accompanying them to France. She received the proposal with pleasure, and invited me to join her in this excursion; which I declined, from the probability there was of her meeting her brother, who, on quitting Loughlean castle, had proceeded to that kingdom.

“ Her nurse, at this period, was in a state of health which threatened a speedy dissolution, and your future destiny now occupied her thoughts.

After much deliberation on the subject, it occurred to her that my brother, who was now married, and in the most embarrassed circumstances, of which she obtained a knowledge by the agonizing distress they excited in my bosom, might be induced to take you under his care, and bring you up as his child, by the advantages with which it was her intention such a measure should be attended. I resisted, however, all her importunate entreaties to make this proposal to him, until she had given me permission to disclose the secret of your birth; without doing which, I justly dreaded creating injurious suspicions in his mind, that might lessen me in his esteem and affection.

"He acceded to the proposal; and gave such solemn assurances of preserving inviolate the secret entrusted to him, as perfectly quietted the apprehensions of miss Decey."

"The nurse, according to her instructions, sent you, with an attendant, to the place whence I was to embark for England."

"And did my mother see me then?" asked Jacintha.

"No, she feared to do so. She appeared affected at parting with me, and seemed by her manner, to feel a presentiment that we should meet no more. Her last words to me were..... 'Remember, Isabella, that more than life is in your keeping; that the hour which injures me in the opinion of the world, is the last of my existence.'

"On reaching London, where my brother then resided, and had provided obscure lodgings for me, I sent for him, and consigned you to his care. I then dismissed your attendant, and remained in retirement, until he had obtained the curacy of

Wyefield, to which place I soon followed him. Mrs. Greville was led to believe I had just arrived from Ireland; and this belief completely prevented her from entertaining suspicions of my knowing any thing respecting you.

“ Ere long, I found a residence in Wyefield extremely unpleasant. The disposition of my sister-in-law was by no means congenial to mine, and the surrounding scenes revived a thousand painful recollections which opposed the return of tranquillity. I therefore gladly availed myself of an offer, made by my kind friend, Mrs. Seymour, who, to my infinite regret, died soon after my departure from Wyefield, to procure me an asylum in the house of the lady with whom miss Decourcy had resided whilst in England.

“ But here again my expectations of happiness were disappointed. Alas! how seldom in this life are they fulfilled! Lady Markham was capricious and arrogant; boastful of the benefits she conferred, and incensed, if they did not render those who received them subservient to her in every respect: but unpleasant as was a residence beneath her roof, I preferred it to a continuance with my brother, in consequence of the selfish and jealous temper of his wife.

“ I had not been many months in lady Markham’s house, ere I received a letter from miss Decourcy, informing me of her nuptials with the earl of Dunsane, whom she described as possessed of every virtue and accomplishment. In consequence of this union, she said, her future residence was fixed in France, where, she trusted, she should find herself amply recompensed for all her past sorrows. She desired me to write to her from time

to time, but solemnly enjoined me never to touch upon past events.

“ She did not speak of her brother throughout this letter ; and her silence respecting him afflicted me, for I still nourished his idea, and sometimes indulged a hope that he would yet discover the injustice he had done me.

“ Some time after the receipt of this letter, as I was sitting one evening with lady Markham, listening to a dissertation upon gratitude from her ladyship, the drawing-room door was suddenly opened, and Mr. Decourcy entered.

“ To describe the agitation and confusion into which his unexpected appearance threw me, is utterly impossible, nor did he appear less affected at beholding me. He soon, however, recovered his composure, and assumed a sudden coldness and reserve in his manner, which prepossessed me with an idea of his indifference, and strengthened my determination to conceal the real sentiments of my heart. Whenever, therefore, we were compelled to converse, it was as total strangers, utterly uninterested about each other..

“ About the time he arrived at lady Markham’s, where he proposed making some stay, a gentleman of considerable fortune, who visited there, and had for some time distinguished me by very particular attentions, tendered me his hand, which I unhesitatingly refused, to the astonishment of lady Markham, who deemed me little less than mad for doing so. I thought Mr. Decourcy appeared somewhat agitated at this juncture ; but the involuntary hopes this idea excited, vanished before his continued coldness.

“ Lady Markham took it into her head one day, before him, to inquire into my particular reasons.

for rejecting proposals so far beyond my expectations.

“Because the person who made them had created no interest in my heart,” I replied.

“She laughed aloud at these words.” ‘Why, child,’ said she, ‘people of fortune seldom think of consulting their inclinations in marrying; how ridiculous, then, for a person in your situation to think of doing so!’

“I made some reply to this speech, which was not agreeable to her ladyship. She began to talk of obligations and ingratitude, and I withdrew from the room in tears, and hastily turned into an adjoining one.

“Here, as I wept over the remembrance of what my faithless fortune promised once, an approaching step made me look towards the door, and I beheld Mr. Decourcy. A sudden impulse of resentment and disdain made me directly turn from him; for at that moment I imagined he had conspired with the rest of the world to oppress and afflict me.

‘Isabella, said he, ‘you will drive me mad if you continue to treat me in this cold and repulsive manner. In vain have I attempted to conquer my passion for you; you still maintain your empire over my heart; and without you I find it impossible to enjoy any happiness.’

“The feelings this declaration excited, you may easily conceive. I believed he was now convinced of the injustice he had done me, and I consented to give him my hand, in full confidence of every injurious suspicion respecting me being obliterated from his mind.

“But, alas! the story which had excited these suspicions, was never contradicted; and in marry-

ing me, he obeyed the violence of passion, and not the dictates of reason.

“ His friends disapproved of our union ; and soon after it, lady Dunsane dropped all correspondence with me, nor has she ever attempted to renew it ; not so much, perhaps, from ceasing to regard me, as in consequence of a coolness which took place between her and her brother from the time of her marriage, which he had strongly opposed ; the earl, he assured me, not being by any means the character she had represented him to be ; and this opposition to their mutual wishes was never forgiven by either party.

“ The hospitality of Mr. Decourcy’s ancestors had considerably injured his fortune ; he therefore received with pleasure a proposal, made him soon after our marriage, of residing in the East-Indies with a rich relation, who promised, if he accepted his invitation, to make him his sole heir.

“ I will not tire your patience, nor wound your feelings, by dwelling upon the sorrows I experienced in India, in consequence of the loss of several lovely children. But their death was not my only source of affliction. Deep fits of melancholy frequently seized Mr. Decourcy, which generally ended in wild and passionate inquiries concerning the mysterious transactions in Ireland ; and too late I was convinced that suspicion, like a subtle venom, is never to be extracted ; and that, like remorse, it has power to poison every enjoyment.

“ You may wonder, perhaps, at my suffering him to retain ideas so injurious to my felicity, when it was so completely in my power to remove them. But, in the first place, I was bound by a solemn oath never to disclose the secret of your birth to him ; and in the second, I was well aware I should

endanger his existence if I did ; convinced, from his proud and vindictive spirit, he never would rest, if once acquainted with them, until he had revenged, or at least attempted to revenge, the injuries of his sister, or, more properly speaking, the wound that had been given to the pride, the dignity, the honour of his ancient house.

“ To enjoy even a moderate share of happiness in the married state, without mutual confidence, is utterly impossible ; and though I am certain the most perfect affection subsists between Mr. Decourcy and me, we are, notwithstanding, wretched and dissatisfied, in consequence of the unhappy doubts engendered in his mind.

“ These doubts were almost fatally confirmed by the discovery Mrs. Greville made respecting you ; and the conduct of Mr. Decourcy upon that occasion affected me so deeply, that, terrified by the situation to which he had reduced me, he solemnly vowed never again to touch upon the subject which had distressed me, provided I consented to give you up. Regard for you, and the pride of injured innocence, then strong within me, made me peremptorily refuse doing this.”

“ Oh ! for heaven’s sake, my dearest madam,” said Jacintha, “ no longer refuse to do so, no longer let me be a bar to your happiness !”

“ We will speak of this hereafter,” replied Mrs. Decourcy.

“ My motives for refusing lord Gwytherin’s request, to inform you of the connection existing between you and him, originated in my fears of its being further discovered by such a disclosure : your prudence, however, and his consideration will, I trust, render these fears ill-founded.

“ His lordship’s mysterious wanderings about the house, were not by any means calculated to tranquillize the mind of Mr. Decourcy ; and consequently, by further disturbing it, they added to my unhappiness...an unhappiness to which you may impute the reserve and gloom which have lately marked my manner. Again Mr. Decourcy proposed.....”

“ Parting with me,” said Jacintha, observing she paused, and appeared greatly embarrassed. “ I entreat you, my dear madam, no longer to refuse complying with his wishes. I can well account for the feelings which give rise to them. But is there no way of removing his suspicions? Must you still continue to be punished for the faults of others?”

“ None, but by a breach of faith, which is not to be thought of,” replied Mrs. Decourcy. “ But I think I should in a great measure prevent their causing me uneasiness, by acceding to his wishes.”

“ Can you then hesitate a moment about acceding to them, my dearest madam?” asked Jacintha.

“ I have only hesitated on your account,” replied Mrs. Decourcy. “ I knew not what reason to assign to you for sending you from me. The explanation, however, which lord Gwytherin has led to, has given me an opportunity of assigning the real one, and, consequently removed my reluctance to comply with what Mr. Decourcy desires ; since, should a separation take place between us, you will now be convinced it is not occasioned by any diminution of affection on my part, as you might otherwise have supposed, if ignorant of the cause of it.

"Humanity, as well as regard, urges me to do every thing in my power to assuage the wretchedness experienced by Mr. Decourcy....a wretchedness, which can only be conceived by those who, like him, at once

"Dote, yet doubt! suspect, yet strongly love."

"The confirmation of his suspicions could scarcely, perhaps, occasion him greater misery than he now feels. How, harbouring such suspicions against me, he could have thought of uniting his fate to mine, may, perhaps, excite your wonder: but ere they were awakened in his mind, his affection for me was too firmly established to be eradicated by any thing but the most convincing proofs of my guilt. Believing he could not enjoy happiness without me, and finding it impossible to win me upon any other than honourable terms, he at length yielded to the violence of his passion, and made me his.

"Thus have I tried to account for what might otherwise appear inconsistent and unnatural, though only, my dear Jacintha, to such as, like you, were not well experienced in life, which daily furnishes instances of still greater inconsistency than what appears in the conduct of Mr. Decourcy.

"He has solemnly assured me, my parting with you shall not render him unmindful of your interest. He has also, in order to furnish a plausible pretext for doing so, proposed going immediately to Portugal, a place he has long been desirous of visiting. Your situation relative to Mr. Oswald, which it must naturally be supposed inclines you to remain where you can receive the earliest intelligence of him, will be quite a sufficient reason for your not accompanying us."

"Undoubtedly," replied Jacintha.

"But where can I find such a residence as I would wish to place you in?" said Mrs. Decourcy.

"I can easily remove all anxiety upon that head, my dear madam," cried Jacintha. "My friend, miss Frankland, of whose marriage I have long since informed you, has repeatedly expressed her earnest wishes to see me at her seat in Essex: I will therefore, with your permission, write to her to-day, and acquaint her with my intention of paying her a visit."

"This idea composes my mind," said Mrs. Decourcy, "and divests it of all uneasiness at the idea of parting from you, but that which must be felt at a separation from those we love."

"But how, my dear madam," asked Jacintha, recurring to Woodville's letter, which she had put into Mrs. Decourcy's hands, previous to the commencement of her narrative; "how am I to act relative to Mr. Woodville?"

"You must acquaint him with the truth," said Mrs. Decourcy; "I see no other method by which you can acquit yourself in his opinion. However unwilling I may be to expose your mother to the slightest degree of censure, yet I cannot think of sacrificing to that unwillingness, the reputation and peace of her daughter. The secret you will entrust to Mr. Woodville will, I am confident, be as secure in his bosom as your own. Until you meet, you must not divulge it, lest any accident should happen to the letter. Mrs. Derwent is wary and suspicious. She has always detested her sister, and would rejoice, I am certain, at having the power of injuring her in the estimation of the world. All you can, therefore, do at present, is to write to Woodville,

and entreat him to suspend his judgment till you see him.

“ Blameless in reality and in appearance may you pass through life, blessed in the consciousness of deserving and possessing a spotless reputation! And in the tender affection of an amiable man, may you find an ample recompence for the unavoidable desertion of those who were bound by the ties of nature to protect you!

“ To hear of your happiness, or in any manner to be accessary to it, will ever confer unspeakable pleasure upon me. I felt interested about you ere I saw you, and I loved you as soon as I knew you, and should have been rejoiced could I have retained you with me, until I had consigned you to the still tenderer care of your beloved Egbert; but though disappointed in this wish, I still encourage a hope of witnessing, at some future period, your felicity with him.”

Too much affected to speak, Jacintha gently raised her hand, and pressed it to her lips.

“ Upon the caution which is necessary to be observed in holding any correspondence with lord Gwytherin, I need not dwell,” resumed Mrs. Decourcy. “ The secret, which it has cost me so much to keep, I am confident you will be careful to guard. I will now seek Mr. Decourcy, and inform him I mean to comply with his wishes.”

She and Jacintha then parted. The latter retired to her chamber, where she immediately sat down to write to her friend, Mrs. Falkland. She also wrote to Woodville such a letter as Mrs. Decourcy had dictated.

Her mind was in a great measure restored to tranquillity by the explanation which had taken place between her and Mrs. Decourcy. The

restlessness attendant on unsatisfied curiosity no longer tormented it, nor was it any longer distressed by apprehensions of having lost the affection of a person she regarded. She also hoped and believed that the unhappy surmises which at present caused a separation between her and her inestimable friend, would at length be overcome by the power of united virtue and tenderness.

On meeting Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy at dinner, the altered countenance of the former demonstrated the pleasure his lady's communication had given him. As soon as alone with Jacintha, Mrs. Decourcy informed her that immediate preparations were to be made for their voyage. Jacintha advised with her, whether she should acquaint lord Gwytherin with her removal from their habitation.

Mrs. Decourcy replied in the affirmative ; desiring her, at the same time, to point out to his lordship the necessity there was for being circumspect in all his actions relative to her.

A letter soon arrived from Mrs. Falkland, expressive of very great pleasure at Jacintha's promised visit, whose company would now be doubly welcome to her, from having lost that of her sister but a few days before.

Three days after the receipt of this letter Jacintha bade her beloved friend adieu, who again assured her of her unaltered regard, and the sincere pleasure she and Mr. Decourcy would derive from accelerating her union with Egbert, by removing any obstacles that might perhaps still continue to oppose it on his return to Europe.

As the time fixed for her departure approached, the reserve of Mr. Decourcy somewhat less-

sened ; and the pleasure he felt at the idea of her removal, was but too evident.

Jacintha travelled in his chaise, accompanied by the housekeeper, to the residence of Mrs. Falkland, which was about thirty miles from his house, and which she reached about the decline of day. Here she was received with every demonstration of joy by her friend, who, after mutual interrogations had passed, conducted her from the parlour, where she received her alone, to the drawing-room, in which a large party were assembled preparatory to dinner.

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CHAP. III.

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“ Through the heart  
“ Should *jealousy* its venom once diffuse,  
“ Ye fairy prospects, then,  
“ Ye beds of roses, and ye bowers of joy,  
“ Farewel; ye gleamings of departed peace,  
“ Shine out your last; the yellow-tinging plague  
“ Internal visions taints, and in a night  
“ Of livid gloom imagination wraps.”

THOMSON.

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ON entering the drawing-room, Jacintha was introduced to Mr. Falkland; a young man of elegant manners, and a prepossessing appearance.

Amongst the company assembled in it, Jacintha was not by any means delighted at recognizing sir George Ashton, the gentleman whose troublesome attentions, it may be remembered, had driven her from the ball given by Mr. Woodville, upon lord Gwytherin's arrival at Wyefield, the preceding summer. He instantly recollected her; and scarcely permitted her to be seated, ere he approached to pay his compliments, and express the extreme pleasure he felt at meeting her so unexpectedly.

“ I assure you,” said he, “ I almost began to despair of ever seeing you again; and I have been

quite inconsolable at the idea, for I have thought of nothing but you ever since I first met you."

"I am sorry your thoughts have not been better employed, sir," replied Jacintha.

"How could they be better employed?" said Mr. Falkland, who stood near her, in a low and insinuating voice.

"In many ways, I think," cried Jacintha.

"Well, I deserve at least some reward for my constancy," said the baronet; "so pray give me some little reason to suppose the pleasure of this unexpected meeting is not entirely on my side."

"I never attempt to deceive," replied Jacintha.

"So then," cried he, "you deny feeling any satisfaction at this interview?"

"'Tis unnecessary to deny what has never been asserted," said Jacintha.

"Still as cold as ever; well, though obdurate in one respect, I hope you will not be equally so in another, nor refuse gratifying the ardent curiosity I feel to learn the strange circumstances which took place at lord Gwytherin's masquerade, and which I have been informed you can well explain?"

"I must refer you, sir," said Jacintha, extremely provoked at these words, "to those who gave you the information, for the explanation you desire."

"I see," exclaimed he, "you are determined to drive me to despair." Then turning carelessly upon his heel, he walked away, humming a new air.

"'Tis well, indeed, for the baronet," said Mr. Falkland, taking a chair by Jacintha, "that he does not possess any great degree of sensibility, else he would, in reality, be driven to despair by the reception he has met."

“He had no right to expect any other,” replied Jacintha, smiling.

“But to know you, and not have wished for another, would have been utterly impossible,” said he. These words were accompanied by a look so full of softness and admiration, that Jacintha felt herself greatly confused by it, which Mr. Falkland perceiving, he immediately ceased from noticing her in any particular manner; and Jacintha, naturally imputing his words and looks to that common-place gallantry with which fashionable men think it necessary to treat the female sex in general, thought no more of either.

The company assembled at dinner were lively and elegant, and the evening passed away agreeably in music and dancing; yet not half so pleasantly to Jacintha, as if it had been devoted to an unrestrained conversation with her friend about former events. She heard, with concern, that sir George Ashton was at present upon a visit to Mr. Falkland, and earnestly inquired from Mrs. Falkland, when she supposed he would depart. On this head, however, her friend could give her no satisfaction.

The ensuing day passed as the preceding one had done, and Jacintha soon found she was the inhabitant of a mansion consecrated to gaiety and pleasure; but in which, with regret, she perceived its young and lovely mistress but little participated. Her surprise at this circumstance was scarcely less than her regret, as she knew Mrs. Falkland had married the man whom she preferred to all others, and was, besides, surrounded with what are considered the most estimable blessings of life. Her melancholy, however, did not long remain a mys-

tery to Jacintha; observation, and her candid confession, fully explained the cause of it.

Romantic, inexperienced, passionately attached to Mr. Falkland, and fondly flattering herself he was equally so to her, she had looked forward to the enjoyment of the most perfect felicity in her union with him. A short time, however, served to convince her, her expectations were to highly elevated. Wild, inconstant, and dissipated, Mr. Falkland, who had married her more for the purpose of obtaining a settlement from his father, than from inclination, soon began to remit those attentions on which she founded her principal hopes of happiness, and relapsed into all his former follies and extravagancies, which, by degrees, coming to her knowledge, infused the most corroding suspicions into her mind, and completely poisoned the fountain of "domestic bliss." But though she ceased in some degree to esteem, she could not cease in any degree to love; she suffered, therefore, continual pain, lest he should at length be totally estranged from her. The most trivial circumstance awakened all her fears, excited her jealousy, and threw her into agonies; and though the gentleness of her temper prevented her from breaking into open reproaches, the dejection of her countenance, her sudden emotions, and the minute inquiries she made into his actions, sufficiently explained to him, and to the world, what was passing in her heart.

Convinced, as she was, of the levity of his disposition, her having invited such a guest, so eminently gifted by nature with every attractive charm, as was Jacintha, to her house, may excite some surprise. But she still retained too high an opinion of him, to imagine he would ever attempt to

violate the propriety which he was bound by every principle of honour to adhere to, beneath the roof where his wife resided, even though he received encouragement to do so ; of which, from Jacintha, whom she looked upon as her sister, and into whose sympathizing bosom she felt a melancholy kind of pleasure at the idea of pouring her sorrows, she could entertain no apprehensions.

Jacintha essayed every art she was mistress of to try and console her, beneath griefs which she could not avoid acknowledging were difficult to bear ; but she soon discovered it was utterly out of her power to administer consolation to a mind diseased like hers. All she could do, was to divert her thoughts sometimes from the troubles which oppressed them, by talking of former events, and dwelling upon the rational hopes which might be entertained of a change being at length effected in the conduct of Mr. Falkland by the undeviating rectitude of hers.

The hopes with which Jacintha endeavoured to inspire her, Jacintha herself, in reality, felt. She saw Mr. Falkland was not destitute of sensibility ; and from the observations she had been able to make upon his disposition, she was led to believe the errors he committed originated more from a too volatile temper, and early introduction into fashionable life, than from any inherent depravity, and were, therefore, such as might be conquered.

About a week after her arrival at his house, she received a letter from Mrs. Decourcy, containing the tenderest assurances of unabated regard, and informing her that she and Mr. Decourcy were on the point of setting out for Falmouth, to embark for Portugal. This letter was soon followed by one from lord Gwytherin, in which he expressed

extreme surprise at the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy from England; and solicitude (dictated, he said, by strong anxiety about her welfare) to know whether there was any truth in the report now in circulation, of their intention of making her their heiress. Jacintha, in reply to this letter, assured him there was not. That all they had ever given her reason to expect from them, was a moderate independence, beyond the possession of which, she declared, her wishes had never soared.

Her time would have passed pleasantly at Mr. Falkland's, but for the uneasiness she experienced on account of her friend, whose dejection, or rather cause for dejection, became every day more and more visible; and the troublesome assiduities of sir George Ashton, which were doubly insufferable, from his giving her plainly to understand, that he considered any notice from him a very particular honour to her.

Mrs. Falkland appeared extremely agitated one evening, at the idea of Mr. Falkland's going to a house in the neighbourhood, where she was certain he would meet a lady particularly obnoxious to her, from the encouragement she had given to his gallantries, and on whose account she had declined the invitation which, with him, she had received to it.

Jacintha, perceiving her every moment growing more uneasy, at length proposed going down to Mr. Falkland, and trying to prevail upon him to give up his intention of leaving home that evening. This proposal was joyfully accepted by Mrs. Falkland, whose pride rendered her unwilling to use any solicitations to him herself upon the subject.

Jacintha accordingly descended from the drawing-room, and sent a servant to inform Mr. Falkland she wished to speak with him for a minute. He instantly came to her. A kind of eager joy diffused over his countenance, and leading her from the hall, where she stood waiting the return of her messenger, into an adjoining parlour, desired to know her commands.

"I am come to tell you," said she, "that your company cannot be dispensed with this evening at home. Mrs. Falkland has received some new music from London, and proposes having a little concert, in which a very distinguished part is allotted to you."

"And do you really wish me to continue at home?" cried he, gently pressing her hand, and looking with the most insidious softness in her face.

"Yes, I do indeed," replied Jacintha, rather hesitatingly.

"Then I will this instant send an excuse, but too happy in having an opportunity of proving the ascendancy you have over me. Oh, miss Greville!" he continued, seizing both her hands as she was turning from him, "how long have I wished for a moment like the present! How long have I wished for an opportunity of disclosing the sentiments with which you have inspired me! From the first minute I beheld you, you have been enthroned within my heart....my soul has paid you secret homage. Nay, do not frown, do not look so indignant....tenderness like mine surely merits some other return than contempt."

"Pray release me, Mr. Falkland," exclaimed Jacintha. "I am impatient," added she, affecting not to believe him serious in what he said,

“to return to Mrs. Falkland, and acquaint her with the success of my embassy.”

“Not till you reward me for my ready obedience to your wishes.”

“A generous mind ever finds a reward in its own feelings, for conferring a favour,” replied Jacintha, still struggling to disengage herself.

“Then thus I take what you refuse,” exclaimed he, catching her in his arms, and passionately embracing her. At this instant, while his lips were pressed to hers, and he held her, in a grasp too firm for her to break from it, to his throbbing heart, the door opened, and sir George Ashton entered. Falkland started, and, instantly releasing Jacintha, turned abruptly to a window to conceal the extreme confusion he was thrown into, whilst Jacintha, overpowered by resentment and indignation, stood transfixed, wildly staring at the baronet.

“Bless me !” exclaimed sir George, after alternately surveying her and Falkland, “how unfortunate ! I really ask ten thousand pardons for my intrusion.”

Then, with a malicious look at Jacintha, he precipitately retired, closing the door after him.

The moment he quitted the parlour, Falkland again approached her. This action directly restored her suspended faculties, and she flew to the door; but ere she could open it, he caught her by the gown.....“Hear me, miss Greville,” cried he, “hear me, I conjure you !”

“Mr. Falkland,” said Jacintha, in a solemn accent, “if you do not wish me to expose you to the contempt you merit, the contempt of your own family, you will not detain me another minute.”

Awed by her manner, or rather perceiving she was too much irritated at present to admit any

apology for his conduct, he no longer prevented her from leaving him ; and she hastened to her chamber, where she threw herself upon a chair, almost breathless from contending passions.

Offended pride and delicacy would have led her immediately to quit a house where she had received such insulting treatment, had not the unhappy consequences which might result from such a measure, opposed her yielding to the dictates of resentment. To depart abruptly, without assigning some cause for doing so, was almost impossible ; and what cause but the real one could she assign ? which, if known to her friend, would, she was well convinced, give a mortal stab to her peace. In pity, therefore, to her, she resolved, after many struggles with her irritated feelings, to pass over the conduct of her husband ; endeavouring to reconcile herself to this resolution, by solemnly determining, if he ever attempted to repeat such conduct, to suffer no consideration to prevent her from withdrawing from his roof.

She tried to hope that it proceeded more from the effects of wine, with which it was evident he was heated at the moment he came to her, than to depravity of principle ; that shame and remorse would attend the recollection of it, and, perhaps, make such an impression upon his mind, as might guard him from similar offences. But, in thinking so, she was utterly mistaken. He was a libertine in every respect, callous to shame and to remorse, and firmly bent upon essaying every art he was master of, to inspire her with such a passion as she had inspired him ; and which, as he boldly declared, he had long been seeking for a favourable opportunity of disclosing, flattering himself, from the high opinion he entertained of

his own attractions, that the disclosure would not be extremely displeasing.

The agitation and distress into which his conduct had thrown Jacintha, were greatly increased by sir George Ashton having witnessed it; not so much from a fear of his mentioning it, for she fancied he would not like to provoke the vengeance of Falkland, who was fiery and vindictive in the extreme, as from an apprehension of his being emboldened by it, to treat her with greater freedom than he had hitherto done.

Her reluctance to meet Mr. Falkland, prevented her from returning to the drawing-room until she was summoned thither to tea. On entering it, she found him, and all the gentlemen who had composed his party, at dinner, assembled there, and beheld a smile upon the countenance of Mrs. Falkland, which denoted the pleasure she felt at his having relinquished his engagement. He started from a sofa, upon which he was carelessly lolling, the moment she entered, and approaching her, attempted to take her hand, and lead her to it; but Jacintha shrunk involuntarily from his touch, and, with averted looks, passed him, and took a seat near Mrs. Falkland, at the tea-table.

"I really thought you had run away, my dear girl," said Mrs. Falkland, "from your long absence."

"Miss Greville is fond of solitude," cried sir George, with a smile, bordering upon a sneer; "but no wonder, she can always employ her thoughts agreeably."

"Not always," replied Jacintha, "for fools and coxcombs will sometimes obtrude upon them."

"But that has not been the case this evening, I flatter myself," said he, looking earnestly at her.

" 'Tis not unusual with you to flatter yourself, sir George, I believe," cried Jacintha.

" Why so severe? Why," asked he in a low voice, " not let me share a little of that mercy you bestow upon others? I assure you, you would not find me undeserving of it."

" Come, come, Ashton," exclaimed Falkland, who appeared uneasy at his whispering to Jacintha, " I cannot permit you to monopolize miss Greville's conversation."

" You may not permit, but you cannot be surprised at my wishing to do so," answered the baronet; " for 'tis natural, you must allow, to try and engross what we admire."

" True," said Falkland; " but this excuse will not avail."

And rising as he spoke, he approached the seat of Jacintha, and placed himself by it. She immediately turned from him, nor could the repeated efforts he made for the purpose, obtain the least degree of notice from her. She acted, however, in such a manner as to prevent Mrs. Falkland from observing her altered conduct towards him. He at length became offended and ill-tempered, and would, in all probability, have left the house, had not hazard been proposed, contrary to the inclination of Mrs. Falkland, who vainly tried to introduce a more innocent amusement.

She and Jacintha were left to amuse themselves the remainder of the evening as they pleased; for the gentlemen did not quit the gaming-table till the night, or rather morning, was far advanced.

The next day was remarkably fine; and at breakfast the ladies were invited to accompany

the gentlemen in an excursion, which had been planned the preceding evening. They accepted the invitation, and curricles, as well as saddle-horses, were accordingly ordered. But when Jacintha found, by the artful management of Falkland, that she was to be his companion during the ride, she positively declined being of the party, to the extreme surprise of all, and manifest displeasure of her friend, who plainly imputed her sudden refusal to the effects of caprice. Nothing, however, could shake the resolution of Jacintha, firmly persuaded as she was, by certain looks of Falkland, that, by accompanying him, she should expose herself to language highly disagreeable (even in idea) to her.

As soon as the party set off, she withdrew to the garden, hurt to think she should have given her friend any reason to suspect her of an unsteady temper; but still more hurt to think of Falkland's persevering in his designs against her, which she had but too much reason to imagine he did, and in consequence of which she feared she should at length be compelled to seek refuge amongst strangers.

All the melancholy ideas her deserted situation had ever inspired (without a settled home, without a friend to whom she could look up for advice and protection), were again awakened, and her tears could not be restrained. The free indulgence of those tears, however, lightened by degrees the oppression of her heart; and a soft and pleasing melancholy gradually diffused itself over her mind, which the gentleness of the day, and the smiling appearance of every thing around her, contributed to render still more soothing to her feelings.

It was now the middle of April, and the season being remarkably mild, vegetation was already far advanced. Again the hills and vales were clothed in liveries of green; again the woods were prodigal of harmony; again the dew-bright borders of the garden were bedecked with flowers, from which the zephyrs that expanded their beauties, wafted the most delicious fragrance.

“Ah!” thought Jacintha, “with what different sensations did I hail the return of this genial season last year! With what pleasing expectations did I then behold the foliage gradually expanding....that foliage,” added she, with a shuddering horror, “which bestrewed with its falling honours the grave of my best friend....of him whom my heart can alone acknowledge as my parent!” She paused, and looked up to heaven. “But this regret,” continued she, “is selfish, convinced as I am, that death must to him have been a passport to joys not less glorious than immortal.”

The tear of tender remembrance, however, could not be suppressed; and seating herself in an arbour, which terminated the walk she was in, she involuntary yielded to the returning sadness of her soul.

“Shall I ever,” she inwardly exclaimed, “shall I ever again be pressed to a heart interested as was his about me? Shall I ever again experience the pleasures of domestic life? Ever more become the inmate of those peaceful shades which afforded me so long their shelter....those dear and delightful scenes of early youth, to which my heart, untravelled, fondly turns, forgetful of the sorrows, and only recollecting the happiness which it felt amidst them....a happiness which, if possible, appears brighter and more perfect in the retrospec-

tion, than it did in the enjoyment? But such, I believe, is ever the case; our blessings brighten as they leave us, and are too often never properly appreciated till gone forever; and

“ ..... not to understand a treasure’s worth  
“ Till time has stol’n away the slighted good,  
“ Is cause of half the poverty we feel,  
“ And makes the world the wilderness it is.”

From her pensive meditations Jacintha was suddenly roused by an approaching step; and raising her head from her hand, she beheld, to her inexpressible surprise and displeasure, Falkland, within a few paces of the arbour. She instantly started up, in order to leave it, ere he could enter, but he was too quick in his motions to permit her to do this; and seizing her hands, vowed she should not leave him, until she had granted him her forgiveness.

“ This rude detention is not the method to obtain it, I assure you, sir,” replied Jacintha, with indignation in her voice and countenance, and struggling as she spoke, though ineffectually, to disengage herself.

“ Why all this coldness and contempt?” cried he; “ what have I done to incur either?”

“ Ask your own heart, sir,” replied Jacintha; “ and if it be not utterly destitute of honour and sensibility, it will better reply to the interrogatory than I can possibly do.”

“ My heart can never reproach me for yielding to a passion inspired by the most lovely and amiable of her sex,” said he.

“ Mr. Falkland,” cried Jacintha, with affected calmness, “ I must suppose your presuming to repeat the insult you offered me yesterday, is occasioned by my then forbearing to resent it in

the manner it deserved. Let me now inform you, sir, that that forbearance was caused, not from wanting either spirit or inclination to resent it, but from what I now find was an erroneous idea, of your head more than your heart being in error, and a wish to avoid any action which could give pain to the too vulnerable heart of my friend ; but were I now to forbear expressing the resentment it has excited, I should consider myself deserving of it. I shall prove that resentment not by reproaches, but by quitting your house....a house in which those ties that even the most common of mankind in general regard as sacred, the ties of honour and hospitality, have been violated."

"On my knees I conjure you to drop such an intention," exclaimed Falkland. "You will drive me to despair, to desperation, if you persevere in it....I cannot exist out of your presence."

"If you knew my thoughts concerning you," replied Jacintha, with a smile of contempt, "you would rather avoid than wish for it. Let your pride, therefore, since you have not virtue to do so, interpose to prevent your any longer thinking of a woman, who looks upon you as the most abject of your sex!"

"Then, by heaven!" exclaimed he, wildly starting up, and clasping her in his arms, "I'll be revenged for her contempt!"

Jacintha shrieked. "Mr. Falkland," cried she, "you will compel me to expose you to the scorn of the world."

"Curse upon the world!" said he, "I care not for its opinion. Riches and consequence will always, I know, command its pleasures ; and its pleasures more than counterbalance any pain its censures may inflict!"

"But the censures of the heart!" cried Jacintha, almost breathless from her efforts to free herself from him, "what can silence these?"

"The enjoyment of its wishes." And again he tried to force her further into the arbour.

Jacintha again shrieked. At this instant a rustling was heard among the shrubs which clustered near the arbour; and the next moment sir George Ashton stood before it.

The presence of a beloved friend never inspired Jacintha with greater pleasure than did his unexpected appearance, raised as were her apprehensions, to the highest pitch of terror, by the wild and savage conduct of Falkland.

"Ha! Ashton," exclaimed Falkland, with a contracted brow, and without releasing Jacintha, "what the devil brings you here? I thought you had proceeded with the rest of the party."

"No," replied sir George, with an air of the greatest carelessness, "I changed my mind. I thought, like you, a ramble in the garden might be productive of greater pleasure than could be experienced by accompanying them."

"Well, why don't you pursue your ramble?" demanded Falkland, impatiently.

"Hold, sir George!" said Jacintha, perceiving he was turning from the arbour. "I entreat you not to go, until Mr. Falkland has released me. He detains me here against my inclination; and though he appears to have forgotten the character of a man, by insulting a defenceless woman, I trust you will not follow his example, by denying her your protection."

"My dear madam," replied sir George, with a bow, "to be your champion upon every emergency, could not fail of giving me the most su-

perulative pleasure ; but excuse me for thinking my services are not requisite at present. I cannot believe Mr. Falkland to be so discourteous a knight, as to detain any lady perforce."

" 'Tis rather improbable indeed," said Falkland, with a laugh ; " and to prove I am wronged in the assertion, since I now understand what the wishes of the lady are, I shall set her free."

" And is it only now you understand them ? Is it only now they have been explained to you ?" demanded Jacintha. " Oh, shame, shame, Mr. Falkland ! I am grieved....grieved beyond expression, on my friend's account, to find you so lost to every principle of honour."

She then quitted the arbour, and hastened to her chamber, where it was long ere she could regain any degree of composure, or consequently set about making the necessary preparations for her departure, which she resolved should take place the next day. She proposed returning to Beech Grove, and remaining there until she could obtain such a residence elsewhere as she wished for ; which she doubted not being soon able to procure, as she was enabled, by the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, to offer the most liberal terms for accommodation, in a private and well regulated family.

The hope of being able to procure a safe and pleasant asylum, though soothing to her feelings, could not perfectly tranquillize them. A fear of offending her friend, by her abrupt departure from her house, without assigning any reason for it, agitated her mind ; nor was it less disturbed by the malicious insinuation which Falkland had thrown out against her to the baronet, which she

endeavoured to flatter herself, however, proceeded more from the impulse of disappointed passion, than any premeditated design to injure her; and would consequently, if productive, or likely to be productive of any thing unpleasant, be contradicted.

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CHAP. IV.

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“ In her ears the sound  
“ Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn’d  
“ With reason, to her seeming, and with truth.”

MILTON.

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MRS. FALKLAND and her party (from whom Falkland and the baronet had separately, and unknown to each other, made a plausible excuse for withdrawing), returned earlier than was expected from their excursion ; but Jacintha did not join them till they were descending to the dinner parlour. She studiously avoided the looks of Falkland and sir George, though both, by every art they could practise, endeavoured to engage her attention ; and appeared so dejected and disturbed, that the affectionate heart of Mrs. Falkland became alarmed. The displeasure she felt at Jacintha’s refusing to accompany her in the morning, vanished, and she eagerly longed for an opportunity of inquiring into the cause of her too evident uneasiness.

“ Something, I am sure, has happened to disturb you, my dear Jacintha,” said she, the moment they re-entered the drawing-room, “ for you look unhappy.”

“ I am indeed unhappy,” replied Jacintha, with a deep sigh, “ at the idea of leaving you.”

"Leaving me!" repeated Mrs. Falkland, with a look, and in an accent expressive of the greatest surprise; "I hope you have no such idea."

"Indeed I have," said Jacintha. "To-morrow I must bid you farewell."

"Good heaven! you astonish me. What can have caused this sudden determination? What can have happened to make you change your intention of remaining with me till the return of Mr. Oswald?"

"My dear Emma," cried Jacintha; "be assured I am not so great an enemy to my own happiness, as to quit your society was it in my power to continue with you; but, in short, you will oblige me extremely, you will add to the numerous obligations I already consider myself under to you, if you let me depart, without further interrogatories as to my motives for doing so."

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Falkland, in a cool and resentful tone. "I should be sorry to intrude inquiries upon you, or attempt to extort your confidence."

"I see you are offended," said Jacintha. "Oh Emma!" added she, with streaming tears, "if you could look into my heart, you would find me an object more deserving of pity than of anger."

"Any anger I feel on the present occasion," replied Mrs. Falkland, affectionately embracing her as she spoke, "proceeds from the doubts which your denying me your confidence, has inspired of your regard. Answer me this one question sincerely....Has any thing occurred in my house to drive you from it?"

"I am sure you don't suppose there has," said Jacintha, trying to evade the question.

"There is a mystery in all this which I cannot fathom," cried Mrs. Falkland, after a pause of some minutes.

"Well," said Jacintha, with affected cheerfulness, "a mystery sometimes gives pleasant employment to the imagination."

"But not in the present case, I assure you," replied Mrs. Falkland, gravely.

"I am certain," said Jacintha, "it would afford you no satisfaction to hear I was leaving your house, for the purpose of trying whether change of scene could divert the unhappiness of my mind."

"And is this your *real* motive for quitting it?" demanded Mrs. Falkland, eagerly.

"I really think," answered Jacintha, evasively, "change of scene is necessary for me."

"And why not acknowledge this before?" asked Mrs. Falkland.

"Because I did not like to let you know how disturbed my mind was."

Every vestige of pique and resentment now vanished from Mrs. Falkland, in consequence of her curiosity being satisfied; and Jacintha rejoiced to find that, without any violation of truth, she had been able to gratify it.

She made no secret of the place to which she was going, and obtained from her, though not without difficulty, a promise to be silent relative to her departure, until it had taken place; for which requested silence, she assigned as the cause, her dislike to the ceremony of taking leave.

A servant was now dispatched to a neighbouring inn to engage a carriage, which Jacintha ordered to be at the door by six o'clock the next morning.

Her mind felt relieved of a heavy burden, by having the disclosure she dreaded over, and every thing settled for her journey ; and its tranquillity was increased by being allowed to enjoy the company of her friend throughout the evening, without restraint or observation, as none of the gentlemen made their appearance till supper, being engaged till then at hazard.

Mrs. Falkland took leave of her in her chamber, with many entreaties for another visit, which Jacintha, however, would not deceive her by promising. In order to avoid any thing like particularity, she left a complimentary message for Mr. Falkland, expressive of her gratitude for the hospitable attentions she had experienced from him.

At the appointed hour, the chaise arrived ; and Jacintha, who was already prepared for her journey, and impatient to be gone, instantly stepped into it. She travelled with such expedition, fearful of a pursuit from Falkland or sir George Ashton, that early in the afternoon, she came within sight of Beech Grove.

Her heart bounded with transport when, through its encircling trees, she first caught a glimpse of it ; but this transport soon gave way to regret and melancholy, when she reflected its beloved mistress was far distant, and that she herself had no longer a right to consider it as her home. Yet still she felt such a confidence of protection and security within its walls, that the nearer she approached it, the more tranquil she became. The beautiful serenity of the evening, the calmness, the verdure, the cheerfulness of the surrounding scenery, also contributed to impart a soothing charm to her mind. Spring appeared literally to have descend-

ed upon the delicious plains she viewed, in a shower of shadowing roses ; and round, "the tepid airs," and "fostering breezes, blew." All nature seemed to feel its renovating influence. The joyous husbandman, cheered by the blended voice of social labour, love, and happy glee, again pursued his task. The flocks playfully bounded over their flowery pastures, and

" The thrush  
" And woodlark ran through the sweetest length  
" Of notes ;"

whilst

" The blackbird whistled from the thorny brake,  
" The mellow bullfinch answer'd from the grove ;  
" Nor were the linnets, o'er the flow'ring furze  
" Pour'd out profusely, silent. Join'd to these,  
" Innumerable songsters, in the fresh'ning shade  
" Of new-sprung leaves, their modulation mix'd,  
" Mellifluous : the jay, the rook, the daw,  
" And each harsh pipe, discordant, heard alone,  
" Aided the concert ; while the stockdove breath'd  
" A melancholy murmur thro' the whole."

Jacintha reached the house without beholding any one belonging to it except the porter, who had opened the gates to admit the chaise into the avenue. All the windows in the front were shut up, and though the postillion knocked loudly and repeatedly, the hall-door remained unopened. Jacintha, on finding this, desired him to drive round to a back court ; but ere he could obey her directions, a country boy came gaping from it. Instead, however, of coming to Jacintha, as she beckoned him to do, he disappeared the moment he had satisfied his curiosity ; and, before the chaise had again proceeded many yards, she be-

held the house-keeper and several servants approaching.

"Why, good gracious!" she heard the former exclaiming, as the driver stopped, "you don't tell me truth, Dick; miss Greville come back! Why, what in the name of *fortin* could bring her here! Aye, so it is she herself, indeed."

"I hope, Mrs. Colville," said Jacintha, with a good-natured smile, "though an unexpected, I am not an unwelcome visiter."

"Lauk, no, to be sure, miss," replied Mrs. Colville, resting her hand upon the chaise door; "but you are not come to make any stay?"

"Only for a few days," said Jacintha. "Some particular circumstances obliged me to leave Mr. Falkland's, and I wish to remain here until I can procure a proper residence elsewhere."

"Dear me, that is very *inconvenient*, for all the best bed-chambers are unsettled, and the furniture covered up, and none of the things are in their proper places at present. Don't you know any place, miss, where you could be more comfortably accommodated?"

Jacintha attempted to reply; but the humiliating idea of being compelled to solicit admission from a reluctant domestic, into a house which, but a short time before, she had been taught to consider as her home, excited such emotions as impeded her utterance, and filled her eyes with tears. Though she hastily averted her head to conceal those tears, they were not unperceived by Mrs. Colville, who, fearing she had given her offence, which, for many reasons, she was unwilling to do, began to apologize for what she had said, assuring her she would do every thing in her power to render her comfortable.

Her reluctance, indeed, to receiving Jacintha into the house, proceeded not from ill-nature, or any dislike to her, but an apprehension that her presence might be an interruption to the pleasure and amusement she had proposed to herself from the company of some friends, whom she had invited from London, and expected in the course of a day or two.

The chaise now drove into the court, and Jacintha was conducted from it into the breakfast-parlour, where, it may be remembered, she had first learned the name of her mother. The recollections which this room revived, at once painful and pleasing, were too much for her already agitated spirits. The tears she had hitherto with difficulty suppressed, now burst forth, and she sunk, trembling and exhausted, upon a chair. Mrs. Colville, who still believed these tears flowed more from wounded pride than any other feeling, now became officiously kind, in order to make atonement for the offence she feared she had given. A table was immediately spread with refreshments, and every thing done which she thought could contribute to Jacintha's ease, or the restoration of her tranquillity. As soon as Jacintha was sufficiently composed to enter into conversation, she informed Mrs. Colville of her anxious solicitude for a residence beneath some respectable roof, and begged to know whether she could put her in a way of accomplishing her wishes.

Mrs. Colville, after some consideration, said she did know a clergyman's family near London, in which she was sure she could be accommodated, and equally certain she would be happy. She then entered into particulars, which tended so

much to confirm this latter assertion, that Jacintha requested she would write the next day, to propose her admission into it, impatient to quit a mansion where she could not avoid thinking herself an intruder.

She would gladly have dispensed with Mrs. Colville's company the remainder of the evening ; her loquacity and inquisitive disposition being extremely fatiguing to her, particularly in the present state of her mind. Mrs. Colville, however, who detested solitude herself, naturally concluded every one else had an equal aversion to it, and therefore persisted in sitting with her, from an idea of obliging her by doing so.

The chamber which Jacintha had formerly occupied, was again prepared for her ; and with a sigh, caused by the contrast she drew between her feelings now, and when she had first become its inhabitant, again took possession of it.

Here, for the purpose of enjoying that uninterrupted quiet which suited her present feelings, she sat almost entirely the ensuing day. As she was reading in the evening, a maid abruptly entered, and informed her there was a gentleman below, who wished to speak to her. The idea of Falkland immediately occurred, and Jacintha inquired whether he had not mentioned his name. The maid replied in the negative.

"What kind of person is he?" asked Jacintha.

"Why, very handsome, indeed, miss," said the girl.

Jacintha was now convinced it was Falkland. Her bosom swelled with resentment, her cheeks glowed with indignation ; and she desired the gentleman to be informed she was so particularly engaged at present, it was not in her power to

receive any visiter. With this message the maid withdrew ; but returned in a few minutes with a note, which Jacintha refused taking.

“ I can’t indeed, miss,” said the girl, laying it upon a table, “ take it back to the gentleman. He seemed quite vexed and angry when I told him you would not see him, and said he was sure, on reading this, you would not any longer refuse coming to him.”

At these words, Jacintha cast her eyes upon the note, and, to her extreme surprise, beheld it directed in the writing of lord Gwytherin. She directly snatched it up, and found it contained the following lines.....

“ I flatter myself it was your ignorance of your visiter’s name, which made you decline receiving him ; hasten to me, dear Jacintha, on perusing this, for I have much to impart.”

Jacintha immediately descended (though not without some little degree of agitation) to the breakfast-parlour, where she understood he waited for her, and was received by him in a very affectionate manner.

He led her to a chair, and having seated himself beside her, proceeded to speak of the disappointment he had experienced on not finding her at Mr. Falkland’s.

“ What,” said Jacintha, “ were you at Mr. Falkland’s to see me ?”

“ Yes, or I should not have known you were here ; for you gave me no intimation of leaving his house in your letter to me.”

“ I had no idea of quitting it when I wrote that letter,” replied Jacintha.

“ Well,” said lord Gwytherin, without troubling himself to inquire what were her reasons for doing so, “ I am come to ask you whether you chuse to pay a visit to your mother ?”

“ Oh heaven !” exclaimed Jacintha, starting from her chair, and with a look of wild surprise, “ is my mother come to England ?”

“ Be composed, my dear girl,” said lord Gwytherin, again seating her ; “ your mother is not come to England ; but her still continuing in France does not render it impossible for you to see her. The earl of Dunsane is dead, and no danger can now attend your introduction to her.”

“ But how, my lord,” eagerly demanded Jacintha, laying her trembling hand upon his arm, “ could I possibly go to France, without exciting suspicions either injurious to myself or to my mother, perhaps leading to the discovery of those circumstances, which I cannot doubt her ever wishing to conceal ?”

“ Certainly,” replied lord Gwytherin, “ as her daughter, she never can publicly acknowledge you ; but privately, I am certain, she will take you to her heart with all the fond affection of a mother.”

“ But what motive can I assign for going to France ?” impatiently demanded Jacintha.

“ You must not let it be known that you are going thither.”

“ How will it be possible to avoid doing so ?” cried Jacintha.

“ Are you not your own mistress at present ?” asked his lordship.

“ I am,” replied Jacintha, with a sigh.

“ And therefore at liberty to go where you please ?”

“ Undoubtedly ; but it will appear strange if I make a mystery of my residence.”

“ There is no necessity for your doing so ; you can say you are going to some remote part of England.”

“ But should an inquiry pursue me thither ?” said Jacintha.

“ Follow my directions,” resumed his lordship, “ and depend upon it there will be no danger of any discovery taking place that you wish to avoid. I know an old and respectable lady in Lancashire, who I am certain, at my request, will permit your letters to be directed to her house, from whence they can easily be forwarded to you ; and with her, you can inform your friends, you are going to reside, until the return of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, or Mr. Oswald.”

“ But the voyage.... the journey ?” said Jacintha.

“ I shall take care that both are conducted in such a manner, as to prevent your leaving the kingdom being even suspected ; in short, if your wishes are really sincere for seeing your mother, there is nothing to deter you from gratifying them.”

“ Sincere !” repeated Jacintha. “ Oh, my lord ! one of the most ardent wishes of my heart is to know and be acknowledged by her !”

“ You consent, then, to accompany me to France ?”

“ Yes, since you have convinced me there is little danger of my doing so, being discovered.”

Lord Gwytherin kissed her hand with transport. “ Propitious be the voyage for both !” said he ; “ may it give to you a mother whom you can

love! to me....." He paused, as if overcome by his emotions.

Jacintha started, and looked earnestly at him. "Do I understand you right?" cried she.

"My most ardent wishes are indeed for an union with your mother," he replied, "and thus to be permitted to have an opportunity of endeavouring to make atonement for my former conduct. Neither time nor levity ever triumphed completely over the passion she inspired in my heart; and but for the continuance of that passion, which prevented my thinking of any other object, I should long since have exchanged the dissipated, unsettled, and desultory life I led, for that domestic state, in which real happiness can alone be found. But in the way of my wishes, I am well aware there are many obstacles; through your means, however, I trust they may be overcome."

"My means!" repeated Jacintha, with surprise.

"Yes, the interest I cannot doubt your exciting in her heart, together with the eloquence I flatter myself you will exert for me, will, I think, by degrees, subdue her hitherto undiminished resentment, and incline her to accept my vows."

"Most happy shall I consider myself," said Jacintha, "if it be in my power to bring about any event which can conduce to the happiness of such near connections. But tell me, my lord, How, when did you hear of the earl's death?"

He had received intelligence of it the preceding week, lord Gwytherin replied, from a very particular friend, an English gentleman, who resided in the neighbourhood of the earl's chateau, in Ro, and knew of his attachment for the countess.

"Knew of it!" repeated Jacintha. "Surely....."

“ I guess the question you are about asking,” interrupted lord Gwytherin. “ No, my dear Jacintha, he knew but of my attachment for your mother ; her fame I have ever guarded more carefully than my life, and ever will endeavour to maintain, even at the hazard of it.”

The whole plan of their journey and voyage was now arranged. It was settled that Jacintha should depart for London the next day, and be set down at lodgings lord Gwytherin promised to provide ; whence, in the course of a few days, she was to set out for Dover with him.

Previous to her quitting London, she proposed making an excursion to Mortlake, for the purpose of inquiring whether any recent intelligence had been received of Egbert, and depositing a letter in Woodville’s hands for him, containing a brief account of the late unexpected discovery, and the events which, in consequence of it, had taken place .....particulars which she feared to transmit by a common conveyance, lest any accident should befall the letter.

For her intended communication to Egbert, she had the free permission of lord Gwytherin and Mrs. Decourcy. The former granted his, from an idea of the advantages which might hereafter result to himself from his relationship to her being known ; and the latter, because she thought, or rather knew from experience, that happiness can never be enjoyed in the married state, without reciprocal confidence and esteem.

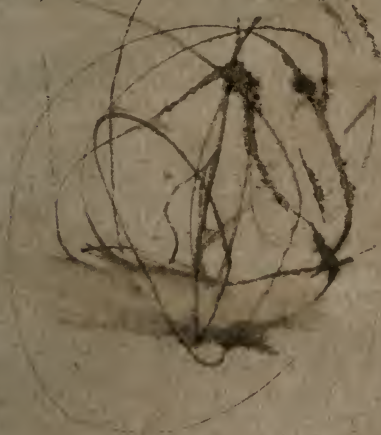
Jacintha deemed it absolutely necessary to inform Egbert of her departure from the kingdom, lest he should return to it before she did.....a circumstance she did not altogether think improbable ; for if received by her mother in the manner

she wished, she felt she should be unwilling to forego her protection for any other than his. That this would be the case, she could scarcely doubt; for to the peculiar delicacy of her situation, and not to any want of natural affection, she imputed the apparent neglect and inattention of the countess.

The sweetest sensations took possession of her mind, at the idea of being received by her with tenderness. Her glowing fancy anticipated the raptures which would attend the moment she should first find herself within her arms...first hear the soft, the soothing voice of a mother, sinking like balm upon her heart, after being so long exiled from the sweets of sympathy and mutual confidence. How delightful to think she should soon acquire a friend, of whose sympathy she was certain, and in whose gentle bosom she could confide every sorrow....every thought! To obtain such a friend, she scarcely thought any difficulty or danger too great to undergo; for to a heart like her's, formed to feel the social charities of life in their fullest extent, there could be no happiness in this life, without a consciousness of loving, and being beloved.

For this unknown parent her filial reverence and affection were alone excited. No effort could overcome the impression of horror which lord Gwytherin had made upon her mind. An union with her mother, she thought, might, in some degree, have a tendency to conquer it; but that such an union would ever take place she could not help doubting, since not only the deep resentment which, by his own confession, the countess felt against him, but the strong attachment Jacintha understood she entertained for her departed lord.

were likely, she thought, to place insuperable bars in the way of his wishes. Her doubts, however, she kept to herself : and every thing being finally adjusted on both sides, lord Gwytherin took his leave, and set out for London.



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CHAP. V.

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“Dissimulation  
“Screen’d her dark thoughts, and set to public view  
“A specious face of innocence and beauty.”

ROWE.

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AS soon as his lordship had withdrawn, Jacintha sent for Mrs. Colville, and apologized for the unnecessary trouble she had given her, in causing her to write to her friend, as it was now out of her power, she said, to go to his house.

“Dear me, miss,” cried Mrs. Colville, with an offended air, “I wish you had known your own mind before you desired me to write; people don’t like to be trifled with.”

Jacintha repeated her apology, assuring her she was serious in her intentions of going to his house at the time she desired her to write, or she never would have commissioned her to do so.

“I suppose, then, you have heard of some other residence, miss,” said Mrs. Colville.

Jacintha replied in the affirmative.

“From the gentleman, I suppose, who was with you this evening,” resumed Mrs. Colville.

Jacintha bowed.

“He is a relation, I presume, miss,” said Mrs. Colville, with a scrutinizing look, which called a blush into the face of Jacintha.....“Pray may

"I ask whither you are going?" continued she, after pausing some minutes, evidently for a reply from Jacintha, which she seemed much disappointed at not receiving.

"Here is my address," cried Jacintha, taking a card from her pocket-book, and writing upon it the direction lord Gwytherin had given her.

"To Lancashire!" said Mrs. Colville, in an accent expressive of surprise. "Why you have a long journey to take. Pray, how soon do you set out, miss?"

"To-morrow," replied Jacintha, "I depart for London."

"London!" repeated Mrs. Colville; "why, bless my heart, miss, that is getting further, instead of nearer, to the place to which I understood you were going."

"Oh!" cried Jacintha, recollecting herself, though extremely confused, "I want to get some things in London before I commence my journey."

She then requested Mrs. Colville would be so obliging as to order one of the men servants to engage a chaise for her against an early hour the next morning; a request which Mrs. Colville very readily promised to comply with, losing in her joy (at getting rid of Jacintha before her own friends arrived) the displeasure she had but a minute before felt against her.

Jacintha now repaired to her chamber, where she passed the principal part of the night in writing to Egbert. She endeavoured, as much as possible, to extenuate the errors of her parents, particularly those of her mother; and to this she was prompted by justice as well as tenderness, since she knew them to have been occasioned not by levity of disposition, but the most insidious arti-

fices. She fully represented the necessity there was for inviolable secrecy respecting her communications, and entreated him to endeavour to encourage favourable sentiments for those who were so nearly connected to her.

At an early hour, the next morning, she quitted Beech Grove, and reached London about two o'clock in the afternoon. She was set down, by lord Gwytherin's direction, at a hotel near Piccadilly, where his valet waited to conduct her to lodgings in Dover-street. Here she remained by herself the remainder of the day, as it had been previously settled that lord Gwytherin should not make his appearance, lest his doing so should excite any suspicion, or lead to any unpleasant discovery.

The hours were prevented from appearing tedious by books, which the servant of the house procured her from a circulating library. Immediately after breakfast, the ensuing morning, she sent for a carriage, and proceeded to Mortlake. She found both Mrs. Derwent and miss Woodville at home, and alone. They received her with surprise, but without the smallest appearance of pleasure. On the contrary, their manner was so cold, so formal, so reserved, that Jacintha, confounded by a reception so little expected (for they had formerly professed, and appeared to feel a friendship for her), was unable, for many minutes, to look up, or answer the kind of supercilious inquiries which Mrs. Derwent made, respecting her present situation; at length she informed her she had left the house of Mr. Falkland.

"Really! Why I thought," said Mrs. Derwent, "since your very tender anxiety about Mr. Oswald would not permit you to accompany Mr. and Mrs.

Decourcy abroad, that you were to have continued there until his return, which they imagined would take place before theirs."

"I thought so too, madam," replied Jacintha; "but some very particular reasons have obliged me to leave it."

"Oh, no doubt! You have always very particular reasons for your actions."

"Such reasons, madam," said Jacintha, indignantly, her pride being awakened by the sarcastic tone in which these words were uttered, "as will ever, I trust, justify those actions to my own heart, and to the world."

"I hope you may not find yourself mistaken in the latter instance," cried Mrs. Derwent.

Jacintha, without seeming to hear her, turned to miss Woodville, and begged to know whether she could see Mr. Woodville.

"My brother returned to Wyefield some weeks ago," replied miss Woodville, raising her eyes from the frame at which she was seated.

"How unfortunate!" sighed Jacintha to herself, disappointed beyond expression at not having been yet able to obtain an opportunity of removing from Woodville's mind, the unpleasant suspicions he had formed respecting her conduct. "But perhaps," thought she, "he may have seen Mrs. Decourcy prior to her departure, and received from her that explanation I wish to give him."

On inquiring of miss Woodville, however, she found, to her extreme mortification, that no interview had taken place between him and Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy since his last visit to their house, a short time before she had quitted it. Unable to endure, any longer, the idea of laying under his

censure, she resolved on writing an explanatory letter to him, ere she quitted the kingdom.

Impatient to put this resolution into practice, and conclude a visit she found so extremely disagreeable as the present, she no longer delayed asking miss Woodville, whether her brother had received any intelligence of his friend ere he returned to Wyefield.

Miss Woodville assured her he had not ; and Jacintha now entreated permission to leave in her hands the letter she had written to Egbert, assigning as a reason for this request, the very great probability there was of their not meeting for some time after his return to the kingdom, as she was removing to a considerable distance from the capital, which she knew he must visit as soon as he came back, and where, perhaps, he would be detained for a long period.

Miss Woodville readily took charge of her letter ; and, losing a great deal of her coldness, desired to know whither she was going. Jacintha, without speaking, though not without confusion, presented her with a card, similar to the one she had given Mrs. Colville.

“ You will not be remote from your old neighbourhood,” said miss Woodville, as she examined it.

Jacintha blushed, and fearful of inquiries, rose abruptly to depart.

“ You seem uneasy, miss Greville,” said miss Woodville, interrupting her as she was bidding her farewell, “ at not seeing my brother. Would you wish to leave a message or letter for him? If you do, I promise to transmit either faithfully.”

Jacintha thanked her, and said she meant to write.

"Then you can do so here," resumed miss Woodville, "and I will inclose the letter in one I am about writing."

Jacintha accepted the proposal, and was conducted into an adjoining room, where she soon wrote a short and explanatory letter, containing a solemn injunction of secrecy relative to its contents. She then took a cool leave of Mrs. Derwent, and not a much warmer one of miss Woodville, and departed.

All the way home she ruminated on their conduct, for which she was at a loss to account. Once indeed it occurred to her, that Woodville might have infused his own doubts respecting the propriety of her actions, into their minds. But she soon dismissed this idea, as one highly injurious to his candour and generosity, which, upon reflection, she was convinced would not permit him to injure her in the opinion of others, particularly whilst her own vindication remained unheard.

In the evening she paid a visit to Mr. Decourcy's agent in the city, for the purpose of inquiring whether any intelligence had been received of him and Mrs. Decourcy since their departure.... an inquiry she could not bring herself to make at Mrs. Derwent's, as she did not like to acknowledge that no correspondence had been established between her and her friend (which, for obvious reasons, the latter had not proposed).

The agent gave her the pleasing information of their safe arrival in Lisbon, where he understood they purposed making a long stay.

"Sooner than they expect may they return!" fervently, though secretly prayed Jacintha, who knew it was not their intention to do so, till her union with Egbert had taken place, in order to

prevent unpleasant conjectures being formed respecting their not again receiving her into their house, which such an event would render unnecessary.

The ensuing evening a note arrived from lord Gwytherin, to inform her he had fixed upon the next morning for the commencement of their journey, and that at an early hour a carriage would be with her. Jacintha was accordingly prepared to enter it the moment it came to the door. Lord Gwytherin, apprehensive of being seen, did not call upon her, and was taken up at his own house in Piccadilly.

They travelled with privacy and expedition; and about the decline of day reached Dover. Instead of stopping at an inn, they immediately went on board a small vessel, engaged by lord Gwytherin's valet, who had preceded them, and which lord Gwytherin preferred to the packet, on account of the secrecy necessary to be observed, relative to his companion. The wind was tolerably fair, and about an hour after they had entered it, the ship was under weigh.

At this moment the spirits of Jacintha sunk. The consequences which might ensue from the step she had taken, rushed like a torrent upon her mind, bearing down all her hopes and expectations. She wished she had given herself a little more time to consider what she was about, but it was now too late to recede or repent; and humbly recommending herself to the protection of Providence, she sat upon the deck, with her eyes fixed in melancholy meditation upon the white cliffs from which she was gradually receding, till sickness overpowered her, and compelled her to retire to the cabin.

At an early hour the next morning they reached Calais. Jacintha had by this time reasoned herself into some degree of composure ; and she felt still more calm and cheerful when she had landed.

In consequence of the extreme sickness she had experienced, they rested that day and the following night at Calais. About the decline of evening, Jacintha prevailed upon his lordship to take her upon a ramble, to see whatever was worthy of observation, or, from ancient story, interesting in and about the town.

The next morning by sunrise, they commenced their journey to Roussillon. It was lord Gwytherin's intention to take up his abode (an intention he had previously announced to him) at the house of his friend Mr. Villers, who resided at a little distance from Perpignan, and near the chateau, as he had already mentioned, of lady Dunsane. To this gentleman, he told Jacintha, he meant to introduce her as his niece, travelling under his care for improvement. Jacintha did not approve of any thing like deception, but in the present case it was not to be avoided.

Her ardent curiosity, so natural to a young and enthusiastic mind like hers, made her often wish for pauses in her journey. Lord Gwytherin made his anxious impatience to behold the countess, a pretext for not gratifying this wish. He had in reality so often gone over the same ground before, that he was completely tired of it ; and it was a rule with him, never to sacrifice his own inclination to that of any other person, except certain that some particular advantage would result from doing so.

He contrived, however, to conceal this selfishness (few indeed were ever more skilled in concealing their defects), and to render himself a very entertaining companion. He related a number of pleasant anecdotes, and described several agreeable scenes, in which he said he had himself been an actor, and which he rendered more amusing and interesting, by pointing out, or pretending to point out, the identical spots where they had happened: thus, like the poet, giving to

“ Airy nothings  
“ A local habitation, and a name.”

After a journey of some days, the travellers arrived at Mr. Villers's, who received his expected visitors with the utmost politeness and hospitality. He seemed about lord Gwytherin's age, was equally elegant in his manner, and scarcely less prepossessing in his appearance. Jacintha was not mistaken in imagining he had been a votary of pleasure, if dissipation can be styled so! but ill health had for some years obliged him to change his mode of life, and induced him to reside in France.

His retreat, for such it might be called, having withdrawn to it from the follies and extravagances of life, lay

“ Between the groaning forest and the shore,  
“ A rural, shelter'd, solitary scene.”

The house spacious, though built in the cottage stile, was fitted up with the most exquisite neatness and elegance; and the grounds immediately belonging to it were laid out with a simplicity, which formed a beautiful and striking contrast to the grandeur and sublimity of the surrounding

scenery. It stood upon a verdant lawn, fenced from the road by thickets,

“ ..... overgrown, grotesque, and wild ;

“ And over head up-grew,

“ Insuperable height, of loftiest shade,

“ Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm.”

On either side umbrageous groves extended. One opening to a distant view of the Mediterranean, and its romantic shores, the other to the wild magnificence of the far-stretching Pyrenees, those stupendous, those glorious monuments of the power of the great Creator, exhibiting at once such a variety of sylvan beauties, and such dreary desolation ; now veiling their aspiring heads amidst the clouds, now bursting in almost terrific majesty from the thin vapour, inspiring awe, astonishment, and admiration.

The lawn, in front of the house, descended, almost imperceptibly, to a broad stream, whose banks were fringed with weeping willows, myrtles, and other odorous shrubs. A marble bridge, of singular beauty and workmanship, crossed it, and led into the deep retirement of hanging woods that rose boldly precipitate above the water. The slender spires of an ancient convent immediately surmounted the wood, and an embattled tower, rendered venerable by the decaying hand of time, which appeared a little further on, gave to the whole a romantic solemnity, highly impressive and interesting.

The travellers reached Mr. Villers's early in the afternoon, just as the evening sun was beginning to diffuse a yellow radiance over the woods, which were scarcely heard to rustle. The scene, indeed, seemed as tranquil as it was beautiful. The cattle that found pasture upon the green

slopes which shelved to the woods, lay ruminating beneath its crowded willows, and a faint warble was alone heard through the groves.

To describe the admiration with which Jacintha viewed this enchanting prospect, would be utterly impossible. She stood for many minutes absolutely lost in wonder and delight; but the embattled tower soon became the most interesting feature in the landscape, from being pointed out to her by lord Gwytherin, as forming part of her mother's residence.

The next day was destined for her to visit this mother, whom her heart at once trembled and sighed to behold. She was to take an introductory letter from lord Gwytherin, and merely announce herself as an English lady, entrusted with a commission from England to the countess. She wished this first interview over, almost as much from apprehension as tenderness; and the nearer the time for its taking place approached, the more agitated she became.

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CHAP. VI.

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“ My mother,  
“ Let me not live ! but at thy very name  
“ My eager heart springs up, and leaps with joy.”

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THE taste conspicuous in the interior of Mr. Villers's house, charmed Jacintha almost as much as that displayed in the disposition of his grounds. She was particularly pleased with the apartment in which they dined. It was built in the form of a pavilion, hung with a light drapery of green silk, and opened entirely in front into the garden, which might literally indeed be styled a wilderness of sweets. Here, while the eye wandered over a richly diversified prospect, while the ear was delighted with the humming of the bees, and the gurgling sound of a water-fall at its extremity, the smell was regaled with the delicious fragrance of orange trees, roses, and lavender.

“ Ah, Egbert,” thought Jacintha, “ with even a bare competence, in such a retreat as this, in our native country, how happy should we consider ourselves ! Ah, if heaven is so much our friend as ever to grant us any thing like it, surely we should never complain of our destiny !”

The heart of Jacintha prompted many inquiries to Mr. Villers, who, she understood, sometimes visited at the chateau, relative to her mother, which prudence, however prevented; and the same motive, she supposed, restrained lord Gwytherin's.

Questions, however, were unnecessary; for Mr. Villers, of his own accord, began to speak of lady Dunsane after dinner.

"You have not yet asked me any thing about my fair neighbour, my lord," said he, smiling at lord Gwytherin. "I hope the smothered flame is not extinguished, at the very moment it might blaze forth without danger."

"By no means," replied his lordship; "but you have hitherto rallied me so much whenever I spoke of her, that I have now forborne to do so on that account."

"But times are changed," cried Mr. Villers.

"True," said his lordship. "Do you think there is any probability of her making use of her restored liberty in the manner I wish?"

"I cannot possibly determine," answered Mr. Villers. "I saw her but once since the death of the earl, and she then appeared in deep affliction. 'Tis a point, however, which I think you cannot yourself endeavour to ascertain too soon; for, I assure you, you will have many rivals. Lord Dunsane, as I mentioned to you in my letter, has left a considerable part of his fortune in her power; and her wealth, exclusive of her personal attractions, renders her a prize well worth contending for. I would not wish to alarm you; but....."

"What?" eagerly demanded his lordship.

"'Tis said that the count de Montalde, appointed by the earl joint guardian with her to the

young ladies, is already a candidate for her hand, which he is instigated to seek as much from interest as love, hoping, if he can accomplish an union with her, to bring about a marriage between his two sons and her daughters; and thus secure the whole of the late earl's extensive possessions in his family."

"You did not mention this report," cried lord Gwytherin, with an agitated and displeased countenance, "when you wrote."

"No, because it did not then prevail."

"And do you give any credit to it?" asked his lordship.

"I really do not know the lady's inclination," replied Mr. Villers, with rather a sarcastic look; "but I know she has reasons for wishing to keep fair with the marquis."

Jacintha started at these words, and involuntarily repeated them.

"What are they?" demanded his lordship in an impetuous voice.

"They were told in confidence, and therefore cannot be divulged. But do not despair; suppose you make your first essay to-morrow, and wait upon her ladyship."

"No," replied lord Gwytherin; "I have not courage to do so, until I know what reception my niece will meet with."

"What, does miss Gwytherin" (for by this name Jacintha had been introduced to him) "propose visiting the countess?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

"She is known to her then?" said Mr. Villers.

"No; but she has procured an introductory letter to her."

Mr. Villers politely offered to attend Jacintha in her intended visit, which offer, as may be supposed, was declined.

It was evident to Jacintha, that lord Gwytherin wished for a private conversation with his friend ; she therefore strolled away, soon after dinner, into the garden, whence she went upon the lawn, and crossing the bridge, pursued her walk along the margin of the stream.

The last gleams of sunshine were now fading from the rocks and mountain-tops, and soon the distant prospect became " one swimming scene, uncertain if beheld." The gloom of evening was rendered more solemn by the stillness which accompanied it. No other sounds were heard but the hollow whispering breeze that shook the woods, the droning hum of the beetle that fluttered through them, and the thrilling song of the nightingale.

The tranquillity of the scene gradually diffused a corresponding tranquillity through the mind of Jacintha ; and as her agitation decreased, her hopes revived. Again she indulged the pleasures of imagination, and anticipated the expected happiness of the next day.

Her thoughts were now too agreeably employed to wish to have them interrupted ; and she wandered on until stopped by a small grotesque building, which hung immediately over the stream, that here, impeded in its course by some moss-covered rocks, foamed over them with impetuous fury, as if impatient to regain the tranquil mazes of the quiet vale.

Curiosity excited in Jacintha a wish to examine the interior of this building. She accordingly tried the door, which readily yielded to her hand,

and she found herself within a handsome octagon room, fitted up, as well as the imperfect light would permit her to discern, in a neat and simple style, and furnished with a variety of musical instruments, which evidently proved its being designed for the reception of company. Amongst those instruments Jacintha perceived a harp, which, in her native village, under the instructions of Egbert, she had been taught to touch with delicacy and taste. Her hand now instinctively swept the trembling chords, and to the plaintive sounds they emitted, her heart vibrated with a mournful kind of pleasure ; for they revived within it a train of tender ideas, and brought to her remembrance the last evening she had passed with Egbert. All the hardships and difficulties he might have encountered since that period, and still perhaps have to encounter ere they again met, rushed upon her mind, and drew a flood of tears from her.

By degrees, however, her confidence in Heaven re-animated her spirits ; and in anticipating the joys of meeting, she tried to soften the pain occasioned by separation.

“ Yes,” she exclaimed, “ I feel that the blissful moment which restores Egbert to me, will amply recompense me for all my cares, my anxieties on his account !”

Lulled again into tranquillity, she quitted the building, and slowly proceeded towards the house, often pausing to listen, with a thrilling sensation of delight, to the noise of the waterfall, softened by distance, and the low murmur of the woods ; still wondering, as she went, that there could be beings so tasteless, so vitiated, as to prefer the crowded confines of a drawing-room, to the plea-

tures which attend the twilight walk, when all is calculated to sooth the soul, refine the thoughts, and elevate them to heaven.

The moon began to unveil her peerless light ere Jacintha reached the house, where she found the gentlemen seated in the vestibule, enjoying the cool breeze that then prevailed, impregnated with the rich perfume of those flowers and plants which own

“The stronger impulse of the evening air.”

Here they supped without any other light than that afforded by the beautiful luminary of the night. The scene reminded Jacintha of a Roman meal in the days of its simplicity :

“Such as the mistress of the world once found  
“Delicious, when her patriots of high note,  
“Perhaps by moon-light, at their humble doors,  
“And under an old oak’s domestic shade,  
“Enjoy’d, spare feast, a radish or an egg.”

She retired early to her chamber, which was elegantly, though simply furnished ; but it was long ere she could withdraw from the window, which presented to her view all the enchantments of light and shade.

Her mind was too much occupied to permit her to enjoy uninterrupted repose ; and at an early hour, just as the matin bell from the neighbouring convent began to ring, she forsook her pillow ; and having, with more than usual pains, dressed herself, descended to the lawn, to inhale the dewy fragrance of the morning. With increasing awe and admiration, she viewed the magnificent and beautiful scenery which every where met her eye ; and from Nature’s works, her thoughts gradually ascended to Nature’s God.

Delighted, not only with the prospects, but the rural sounds that now prevailed, she continued to wander about till joined by lord Gwytherin, who, after giving her some general instructions relative to the approaching interview, and the letter she was to present to the countess, led her in to breakfast.

Immediately after it was over, Mr. Villers's chaise drove to the door for her. At this moment her spirits again began to fail her, and she wished for the company of some supporting friend. Lord Gwytherin perceived her agitation, and hurried her to the carriage, fearful, if he allowed her time for deliberation, her resolution would utterly forsake her.

Jacintha now endeavoured to reason herself into composure ; but her efforts to do so were vain, and she arrived at the chateau in an agitation which scarcely permitted her to speak or move. Though from its elevated situation, it appeared so immediately in the vicinity of Mr. Villers's mansion, it was at least two miles from it ; and its gloomy grandeur was not calculated to reanimate the spirits of Jacintha.

By the marriage of one of the earl's ancestors with a French heiress, it had come into his possession ; and though care was taken to preserve it from injury, the power of all-conquering Time was in many parts discernible, particularly in its battlements and rugged towers, upon which the moss of years grew green, and from whence the wild fox-glove and wall-flower hung in fantastic wreaths, intermingled with the mantling ivy, and, like ill-suited ornaments upon age, rendered but more conspicuous its decay. Woods of ancient growth surrounded the lofty eminence

upon which it stood, and excluded every prospect but that of their own luxuriance, and the romantic mountains of the Pyrenees.

After driving through two spacious courts, the chaise stopped before the castle, and Jacintha, being informed that the countess was at home, alighted; and having delivered a message for her, though in low and faltering accents, to a servant, was conducted by another through a magnificent antichamber, into an inner apartment, like the preceding one.....

“ In pictur’d pomp array’d.”

Here Jacintha had not sat many minutes when she heard voices in the outer room, and approaching steps. This seemed the most awful moment of her life. Her heart throbbed as if it would burst from her bosom; and when a servant threw open the door, and announced the countess, she could with difficulty rise from her chair. It would be impossible to determine whether respect, tenderness, or admiration, were at this instant most predominant in the mind of Jacintha. The charms of the countess, unfaded by time, were such as she had never seen excelled; nor was the elegance of her form less striking than the beauty of her face, which her mourning habit rendered more interesting, as it did the graces of her form more impressive. But even at the first glance, Jacintha could not avoid secretly acknowledging that, though more dazzling to the eye, Mrs. Decourcy was more pleasing to the heart. Sweetness, softness, and sensibility, formed the character of her countenance....pride, spirit, and haughtiness, that of the countess’s; she looked, in short, as if born to

command the homage of mankind, and determined to exact it.

The servant retired the moment she entered the room; and motioning for Jacintha to resume her chair, she took one by her. Jacintha now attempted to speak, but in vain; and she involuntarily bent her eyes upon the ground, to avoid the scrutinizing looks of the countess.

Lady Dunsane, at length, after a silent, though critical examination; entreated to know to what circumstance she was indebted for the honour of this visit.

At these words, Jacintha, still unable to speak, drew from her bosom lord Gwytherin's letter which she presented to her with a trembling hand, and which contained the following lines:

“ Though I sigh for an opportunity of pouring forth my repentant sorrows at your feet, and trying to depreciate your just resentment, I dare not attempt to enter your presence without your permission. Oh, lady Dunsane! let the sincerity of my repentance for my offences against you, the fervor of my unabated passion, plead in my behalf, and influence you to grant me this earnestly desired permission; but should these be insufficient to obtain it, oh, suffer the solicitations of a child, pleading the cause of an unhappy parent, to prove successful! Yes, lady Dunsane, this letter will be presented to you by your own daughter! she to whom we have hitherto been compelled to deny that notice which her virtues merit, and her tenderness claims. Take her to your bosom; she is worthy being folded to it, and permit her to intercede for her repentant father.

“ GWYTHERIN.”

Scarcely had the countess cast her eyes upon this letter, which she tore open with the most impatient eagerness, ere her colour changed, her brows contracted, and her whole frame seemed violently agitated. Before she had well finished it, she crushed it in her hand, and wildly starting from her chair, seized the arm of Jacintha, and exclaimed, while her eyes lightened with fury, "Am I then exposed, betrayed, insulted?"

Jacintha, shrinking from her grasp, instinctively dropped upon her knees, and wrapping her arms about her, exclaimed....

"Oh, my mother! will you not then acknowledge me?"

"Tell me," said the countess, disengaging herself from her, "tell me," she continued, "if you do not wish to see me start into instant madness, whether your relationship to me is universally known?"

Jacintha, in faltering accents, assured her it was not; and the countess, panting and trembling, from the violence of her emotions, dropped upon a chair.

"Alas! then," said Jacintha, who still remained upon her knees, "you refuse to own me?"

"Rise," cried the countess, "I scarcely know what I am about. Tell me," added she, after a momentary pause, and raising her head from the back of the chair, as Jacintha rose from her kneeling posture, "by what means you discovered your birth: for a solemn vow was plighted to me, that you should never know your parents."

Jacintha could not refrain from tears at these words; and for many minutes she was unable to reply to the countess. She then briefly informed

her that it was lord Gwytherin himself who had disclosed it to her.

“And how did he learn you were in existence?” asked the countess. “He knew not the persons in whom I reposed confidence, and consequently could have made no inquiry of them concerning you.”

“Mr. Greville informed him,” Jacintha replied.

“Mr. Greville?” repeated the countess, indignantly; “and what motive instigated him to violate his promise of secrecy?”

Embarrassed by this question, Jacintha hung her head, utterly at a loss how to reply to it. She then timidly answered, she supposed Mr. Greville had acquainted lord Gwytherin with her relationship to him, from an idea of its being an advantage to her to have it known.

The countess looked incredulous, and rising, seemed about quitting the room.

“Do you then refuse to acknowledge me?” cried Jacintha, clasping her hands together. “Do you then cast me off for ever? I aspire to no title which you do not wish me to take. I desire but that place in your affection, which nature has given me a right to claim. Oh! disappoint not the hopes of my heart,” she continued, again sinking on her knees before the countess; “let me not still continue to think myself a solitary and forlorn creature, exiled from all the social sweets of life..... unconnected with the world! Ah, if you knew the dreadful sensations such a situation inspires.....if you knew what it is to imagine no being interested about you, you would from pity, if from no other motive, regard my wishes.”

“I mean to return to you,” said the countess, “as soon as I recover a little composure. Wait

here," added she, taking the trembling hand of Jacintha, and raising her as she spoke, "until I return; but remember," said she, in a low and inward kind of voice, "if you breathe a syllable of what you have uttered to me, you sink your mother to perdition!"

The look which accompanied these words, as well as the purport of them, made Jacintha shudder; and, in a state of agitation, which may better be imagined than described, she threw herself upon a seat, where she remained till the re-entrance of the countess, who continued about half an hour absent.

The stormy passions of her mind seemed now allayed; and though her cheek still retained the glow of agitation, her eyes had lost their fierceness, and her brows their contraction.

"Impute not," said she, advancing to Jacintha, who rose at her approach, and taking her hand, "impute not the reception you met from me to unkindness, but to the real cause, surprise and apprehension. I should do myself injustice if I did not assure you that you have never been banished from my thoughts, and that it was my intention to go to England in a very short time, for the purpose of inquiring into your situation, about which the lapse in Mrs. Decourcy's correspondence and mine, for a considerable period, prevented me from receiving any intelligence. Though the unhappy circumstances you are so well acquainted with, preclude a public acknowledgment, my heart with readiness admits your claim to my tenderness, protection and support; and to fulfil to you the duties of a mother, will be amongst the first pleasures of my life."

Jacintha threw herself with grateful transport upon the bosom of her mother, which she bedewed with her tears.

The countess embraced, and endeavoured to compose her. As soon as she had succeeded in some degree in tranquillizing her, she desired to know her present residence. Jacintha immediately informed her, as also the character under which she had been introduced to Mr. Villers, and the reason assigned to him for her visit to the chateau.

The countess's inquiries being thoroughly satisfied, she said she would no longer detain Jacintha, but assured her she would take an early opportunity of seeing her again, and in the interim arrange some plan for their being together.

Jacintha kissed her hand, and rose to depart. At this instant she recollected lord Gwytherin, recollected the promise he had obtained from her, of pleading for him; and ashamed and unwilling to break this promise, to appear as if her own interests rendered her forgetful or regardless of the interests of others, she asked, though in a hesitating accent, whether there was not some message for.... Here she again paused; that appellation which her heart had hitherto refused to give lord Gwytherin, she could not now bring herself to bestow, and with an embarrassed air, she added.... "for lord Gwytherin."

"Give him this note," replied the countess, putting one into Jacintha's hand. "Adieu, my love! she added; "may you be as happy and fortunate, as you are amiable and lovely."

The interview she had dreaded being over, acknowledged by her mother, and assured of her affection, the heart of Jacintha gradually began to experience something like that happiness and

tranquillity which so many untoward events had contributed to banish from it.

Lord Gwytherin watched impatiently for her return. The moment the carriage stopped, he flew to it, and having handed her from it, led her to a distance from the house, where he poured upon her a torrent of inquiries.

Jacintha, as briefly as possible, answered them. She suppressed all that was disagreeable in the late interview, and which she really imputed to the cause assigned by the countess, and only dwelt upon what was agreeable; concluding her little narrative, by giving to his lordship the countess's note.

"An interview!" exclaimed he, as he eagerly perused it. "Did she say nothing to you," turning to Jacintha, "of having desired to see me this evening at the chateau?"

"No," replied Jacintha, much surprised at her silence upon this subject, "she did not."

His lordship mused for some minutes; and then putting the letter into his pocket, reconducted her to the house, enjoining her, as they proceeded, not to drop a hint to Mr. Villers respecting his intended visit to the countess.

Jacintha assured him his injunctions were unnecessary, as her own prudence would have kept her silent respecting it; but she could not possibly imagine, she said, how he could go to the chateau without Mr. Villers's knowledge.

"I must endeavour to do so," said his lordship. "Luckily two gentlemen spend the day with him, so that I can easily disengage myself from him."

The day was far advanced, and dinner was served almost the moment he and Jacintha re-entered the house. Jacintha withdrew, soon after it was over,

to a dressing-room adjoining her chamber, which contained a good collection of books; and with one of these she seated herself in a window, from whence she saw lord Gwytherin, in a few minutes, quitting the house, and hurrying towards the road.

After remaining some time alone, Mr. Villers sent to request her company to coffee; she accordingly descended to the parlour. As Mr. Villers handed her to a chair, he informed her that a sudden indisposition had caused lord Gwytherin to leave the room, in order to try whether the air would be of any service to him. "If he prolongs his stay, you must not be alarmed," continued Mr. Villers; "for he told me if the air was of benefit to him, he would in all probability ramble about for some time."

In the course of the evening, Jacintha walked out with Mr. Villers and his guests (who were both officers in the French service, lively and intelligent), to some distant grounds, not less beautiful nor romantic than those immediately adjoining the house.

As they were returning to it, lord Gwytherin joined them. After answering Mr. Villers's inquiries, he contrived to detach Jacintha from the rest of the party, who, perceiving he wished to converse with her in private, walked on.

"Your mother," said he, when they had got to a sufficient distance not to be overheard, "is quite charmed with you; and so anxious to enjoy your company, without restraint or interruption, that she proposes your going to a chateau, at some distance from the one where she at present resides, and to which she will follow you in a day or two."

"Can I not travel with her?" asked Jacintha.

“No, she is fearful, if you did, that unpleasant inquiries or suspicions might be excited. In the abode to which she has invited you, you can freely and unreservedly converse, and arrange every necessary plan relative to a future correspondence and intercourse, as it is merely occupied by a few old domestics, to whom you are to be introduced as a young English friend of the countess, compelled by misfortunes to seek an asylum out of your native kingdom. She designs passing a month there ; and as I have acquainted her with your situation in every respect, she does not think it expedient for you to be absent longer than a month from England ; at the expiration of this period, therefore, I am to rejoin you, and reconduct you back.”

“Rejoin !” repeated Jacintha ; “ what, are you not to be of our party ?”

“No,” replied lord Gwytherin, smiling ; “though the resentment of the countess is softened, it is not subdued. Time, however, will, I trust, bring about the accomplishment of my wishes ; one of the most fervent of them is, I assure you, already fulfilled, in having you, my dear Jacintha, taken to the bosom of your mother.”

“And when, my lord, is this projected journey to take place ?” asked Jacintha.

The ensuing day, lord Gwytherin replied. At the distance of a few miles from Mr. Villers’s house, a confidential servant of the countess, he said, was to meet her in a chaise, to which he meant to convey her himself in his own carriage.

“But what reason can be assigned to Mr. Villers for my sudden departure from his house ?” demanded Jacintha.

“Merely that hearing (at the countess’s) a young French lady, with whom you had formed an inti-

mate acquaintance in England, was a resident in a neighbouring convent, you have requested me to lodge you there for some time, on her account."

"Should Mr. Villers be too minute in his inquiries?" said Jacintha.

"I shall be able to answer them in such a manner as will not lead to any discovery," resumed lord Gwytherin.

He now conducted her to the house, where they found Mr. Villers alone. Lord Gwytherin immediately spoke of Jacintha's departure. Mr. Villers looked surprised, but (without asking any of those questions which Jacintha dreaded) expressed his regret at being so soon deprived of her company.

Lord Gwytherin's carriage was ordered to be ready at an early hour the next morning; and as soon as breakfast was over, Jacintha bade Mr. Villers adieu, and commenced her journey, elated at the idea of being her mother's guest, whose solicitude for her company was a flattering proof of her regard.

She soon perceived they were travelling towards the Pyrenees; and now, for the first time, inquiring the situation of the chateau to which she was going, learned that it lay amongst these romantic mountains.

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CHAP. VII.

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“ Those towers, alas ! now stand forlorn,  
“ With noisome weeds o’erspread,  
“ Where feasted lords and courtly dames,  
“ And where the poor were fed.”

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LORD GWYTHERIN’S carriage stopped, in about an hour, near the entrance of a wood, and he and Jacintha alighting, walked onwards to a turn in the road, which the branching trees concealed till they were immediately at it. Here they found the expected chaise and attendant; the postillion stood near the door, as if watching for their approach, and the moment they appeared, he hastened to open it.

At this instant the looks of lord Gwytherin became gloomy and disordered ; he paused, sighed, and grasping the hands of Jacintha within his, seemed uncommonly agitated.

“ Jacintha,” said he, in a voice which well accorded with the expression of his countenance, “ Jacintha, endeavour to think favourably of me. I am not so culpable as you may be led to imagine. It is not inclination, but inability, which has prevented me from being your friend.”

“ Be assured, my lord,” replied Jacintha, affected by his emotion, and with a peculiar softness in her voice, “ I will endeavour to cultivate the sentiments you wish me to entertain.

Lord Gwytherin pressed her hand affectionately to his bosom, and then led her to the chaise, into which she immediately stepped: and the postillion instantly mounting, drove off at full speed.

Jacintha soon began to converse with her companion, an elderly woman, of no very prepossessing appearance, but not of an ungracious manner.

They travelled with expedition; and ere long began to ascend the Pyrenees; the wonder and admiration with which Jacintha had viewed their stupendous scenery at a distance, were now increased by a nearer survey of it. Their bold outline had given her no adequate idea of their interior beauties and sublimity.....the rude magnificence of their rocks, the grandeur of their forests, the verdure of their winding vallies, rendered still more romantic than nature had already made them, by the humble but picturesque cabins of the herdsmen, and the clambering goats that scaled their steep acclivities. A kind of awful pleasure, too great, too exquisite to be expressed, took possession of her mind, and her heart paid involuntary homage to that Being, whose glorious works she contemplated on every side.

About the middle of the day, the chaise stopped in a deep valley, and the travellers alighted, and seated themselves beneath the projection of a shrubby rock, from whence pines and wild ash hung, "resounding o'er the steep." Here Jacintha and her companion dined upon the cold provisions which they brought with them, and remained till the mules, which had been unharnessed on their quitting the chaise, were rested.

Jacintha was delighted, whilst she sat here, with the humming of the mountain bees, and the lulling sound of distant waterfalls. Nor were her eyes less charmed than her ears. The valley was adorned with the most beautiful verdure. The aspiring mountains, were clothed at their base, and in many places more than midway up their steep ascents, with variegated woods, o'ertopped by broken rocks, tinted with a rich and solemn colouring. Small silvery rills from their summits descended to the valley, where, uniting, they flowed through a deep and pebbly channel, which their continual dropping had worn in it; forming a stream sufficiently broad and clear, to reflect the romantic scenery on either side.

About the decline of day, as the chaise was slowly ascending a mountain, infinitely more dreary and rugged than any Jacintha had yet beheld, and united to another by a wooden bridge of rude workmanship, her companion informed her they were near the end of their journey, pointing, as she spoke, to an ancient edifice which crowned the brow of the opposite cliff, and was backed by an extensive and hanging wood of gloomy pines. Jacintha on finding she must cross this terrific bridge, insisted on doing so on foot. She accordingly quitted the chaise, and, followed by her companion, slowly proceeded to it, shuddering at going over it even in this manner, from the frightful dangers, which its tremendous height above the rocky chasm that yawned below (through which a mountain torrent foamed with impetuous fury), presented to her view. But if her imagination was here impressed with terror, her mind was not less affected with melancholy, on beholding the mournful desolation of the building she was

about entering ; for over the ruins of what was once great and noble, the heart of sensibility involuntarily laments.

This building appeared to have suffered scarcely less from desertion than from time. From its massy walls it might be seen, that had attention been paid to it, it would have retained much more of its primeval strength and grandeur than it did at present....a strength and grandeur now too much injured ever to be restored.

The swelling towers that flanked it, and the embattled ones that terminated the terrace, which on either side extended along the edge of the cliff, were mouldering away. Their battlements were broken, and fringed with weeds ; and the terrace itself, once fortified, was now covered with rank luxuriance....here the purple thistle reared its prickly head, and the long grass whistled in the wind. The rich stone-work that ornamented the front of the edifice, was scarcely discernible through the moss of years, and many of the narrow casements were half obscured by creeping ivy.

On reaching the gate which opened from the bridge into the court, Jacintha's companion rang the bell which hung within it. Whilst they stood waiting for admission, Jacintha attentively examined the pile, the decay of which was now rendered more conspicuous and awfully impressive, by the kind of luminous gloom, if I may be allowed the expression, which the streaming purple of the setting sun cast over it. As she gazed, the following lines, truly descriptive of it, occurred to her recollection :

- “ Methinks suspicion and distrust dwell here,
- “ Starting, with meagre forms, thro’ grated windows ;
- “ Death lurks within, and unrelenting punishment
- “ Without ; grim danger, fear, and fiercest power,

“ Sit on the rude old tow’rs and Gothic battlements ;  
“ While horror overlooks the dreadful wall,  
“ And frowns on all around.”

ROWE.

In a few minutes an approaching step was heard, and soon after a man appeared, peeping over the terrace wall. The instant Jacintha’s companion, mademoiselle Dupont, perceived him, she addressed him in familiar terms, and bade him hasten to let them in. He answered her with a loud exclamation, expressive of surprise ; and quickly descending, unbarred the gate, and revealed to the eyes of Jacintha, the interior of a court, not less dismal than the walls which environed it.

This man was old, meanly habited, and seemed well acquainted with mademoiselle Dupont ; a circumstance which did not surprise Jacintha, as she understood this was not her first visit to the chateau. He examined Jacintha with the most scrutinizing earnestness, and eagerly inquired from her companion the cause of this unexpected visit ; to which inquiry he received no direct answer.

They entered from the court into a spacious hall, supported by a double row of black marble pillars, through which the small arched casements admitted too feeble a light to dissipate the gloom that reigned throughout. At its extremity were folding doors of heavy workmanship, which opened into the interior of the building, and above them a stately gallery, with “ tasteless sculpture decked,” from whence, in former days, the lords and ladies of the castle viewed, upon particular occasions, the pastimes of their vassals,

Of those days, nothing now remained but the most melancholy memorials....no object here but seemed mortality to mourn. “ And like these,” involuntarily cried Jacintha to herself, “ in whose

steps I now tread with reverential awe, I shall one day pass away, and be forgotten. Surely, if such a reflection was oftener indulged, the pride and vanity of man would be checked. 'When he thought that the valiant must one day fall, and be no more known on his hills;' he would endeavour to render himself renowned whilst he could, not by ostentation, but by virtue. He would endeavour to perpetuate his memory, not by monuments, doomed, like himself, sooner or later, to inevitable decay; but by such actions as should benefit others, and give him a claim to the gratitude of posterity."

On passing through the folding doors, which fronted a grand staircase, they stopped, and the shrill voices of Jacques re-echoed through the roof, and soon brought his family, consisting of a wife, a daughter, and two sons, both grown up, about him. They manifested not less astonishment than he had done, at beholding mademoiselle, and, like him, gazed earnestly at Jacintha.

Mademoiselle, having answered a few trifling questions, led the way to a parlour, which it was evident, from the dusty appearance of the faded furniture, and the damp smell within it, had long been unoccupied. Here she left Jacintha, telling her she would soon return, and withdrew with Jacques and family, who had followed her to the door, which she carefully closed after her.

The dejection with which the melancholy appearance of every thing about her had infected the mind of Jacintha, was increased by solitude, and her tears began to flow. A sadness not to be described, weighed heavy on her heart, at the idea of being amongst total strangers, far, far remote from all who loved....from all who were interested about her.

In vain she tried to cheer her spirits, by reflecting that she should soon enjoy the company of the countess. They were too deeply affected to be easily re-animated ; and the deepening gloom of evening, which now not only involved the cloud-capped mountains she viewed from the apartment, but the apartment itself, in mournful obscurity, threw such an additional gloom upon them, that she was about seeking mademoiselle Dupont, who continued much longer absent than she expected, when she made her appearance, preceded by Josephine, the daughter of Jacques, bearing a light.

“ In tears, mademoiselle !” exclaimed she ; “ I am afraid this dismal habitation has made you melancholy.”

“ It has, indeed,” replied Jacintha.

“ Then we must try to enliven you,” said mademoiselle ; and taking the cold hand of Jacintha, she led her from this parlour to another, at some distance from it, not less spacious, but rendered infinitely more cheerful by a blazing wood-fire.

Here Jacques and his wife were both busily employed laying the cloth for supper, at which, not only they, but their daughter attended, and during which they frequently joined in the conversation. This was a liberty which their age, and the long period, she understood, they had served in the earl of Dunsane’s family, excused to Jacintha, who felt amused by the little anecdotes they related respecting it.

Mademoiselle Dupont seemed pleased to observe her dejection lessened, and exerted herself to banish it completely. She assured her there was no doubt of the countess’s being at the chateau in a day or two, and threw out indirect hints

of the admiration and tenderness which she was convinced she felt for her....hints which contributed more forcibly than any thing else, to impart a soothing charm to the mind of Jacintha.

Soon after supper she proposed retiring to rest ....a proposal extremely agreeable to Jacintha, who was fatigued both in body and mind. Josephine accordingly tripped up the great staircase before them, bearing lights; and from whence she conducted them down a long gallery, ornamented with old portraits large as life, and which appeared frowning from their ponderous frames, at the neglect to which they were consigned.

At the extremity of this gallery was the chamber destined for Jacintha. Josephine threw open the door, and mademoiselle having glanced within it, hastily wished her good night. At this instant Jacintha thought mademoiselle's countenance assumed a ghastly paleness, and instead of repeating her wish, she eagerly inquired whether she was unwell.

"Unwell!" said mademoiselle; "no, what makes you imagine I am?"

Jacintha informed her.

"No-a," said she, "I am merely tired-a."

"Then I will no longer detain you-a," cried Jacintha; and taking a light from Josephine, whose attendance she declined, she entered the chamber, and closed the door.

Had the heart of Jacintha been at all inclined to superstition, the sepulchral gloom of this chamber was well calculated to awaken it; but against this weakness the well-remembered lessons of Greville, and her own strength of mind, guarded her. She could not, however, without a shuddering sensation, survey it, and perhaps would

not have felt sorry to have had the company of mademoiselle Dupont. It was not only larger, but more dreary than the apartments she had seen below. Its tapestry, torn in many places, discovered a dark wainscoting of oak; and the long purple curtains, which descended from the lofty tester of the bed, appeared, by the faint light which now gleamed upon them, to be black.

Mournful images of death rose to the imagination of Jacintha, and she stood some minutes lost in pensive meditation; then feeling that melancholy, which had so recently been banished from her mind, fast gaining upon it, she recommended herself to the protection of Heaven, and sought in sleep to lose her cares. Sleep, however, was far from delivering her from them; frightful visions disturbed and terrified her, and she rose in the morning oppressed and unrefreshed. The bright beams of the sun which darted into the chamber, somewhat cheered her mind, and it was still more enlivened by the beautiful prospect it commanded. The windows looked over the walls of the court into a smiling valley, watered by clear rivulets, covered with rich verdure, and scattered over with flocks and clambering herds. The ascents on the opposite side were clothed to their very summits with luxuriant pines, amidst which, in the remote landscape, a shepherd's cabin here and there peeped forth, whilst surmounting all, appeared congregated rocks and mountains, their etherial summits now every moment brightening to the view.

Jacintha stood long admiring this pleasing scene, and then quitted the chamber to descend the stairs. At the foot of the staircase she was met by Josephine and her mother Nannette, from whom

she inquired whether mademoiselle Dupont was yet up.

"Yes, she has been up some time," replied Nannette, as she led the way into the parlour where Jacintha had supped the preceding night, and in which the breakfast things were now laid.

"Then she will be here soon, I suppose," said Jacintha.

"Not very soon, I believe, mademoiselle," replied Nannette, smiling: "this letter (and drawing one from her bosom, she presented it to Jacintha) may perhaps account for her absence."

"Her absence!" repeated Jacintha. "Good heaven! what do you mean?" and snatching the letter, she eagerly tore it open, and read the following lines:

"The sword hangs suspended over your head; breathe but a syllable of what you have divulged to me, and it falls. Yes, a still heavier punishment than that which your presumption has drawn upon you, will then be yours, if you dare to disclose, even in the solitary confinement to which you are doomed for life, that secret I wish to be concealed. From what I have done, judge of what I am capable of doing; so provoke no further the vengeance of

"A. DUNSANE."

Overpowered by the dreadful shock this letter gave her, Jacintha sunk fainting on the floor. When she recovered, she found herself supported between Nannette and Josephine, and all the rest of the family assembled about her. She looked wildly round her for a minute; then recollecting her situation, she disengaged herself, and obeying

the impulse of her feelings, threw herself upon her knees, and implored them to have pity upon her, and restore her to that liberty of which she had been so cruelly, so unjustly, so treacherously deprived.

She used all her eloquence to awaken their humanity. She offered to put many valuable presents which she had received from Egbert (and which, with the remainder of her things, she packed up, and brought with her to France,) into their possession, if they would set her free. But supplications and offers were alike unavailing; and Jacques, in rather a disdainful tone, at length exclaimed....“Lady, we eat the bread of the countess, and nothing can bribe us to betray the trust she has reposed in us.”

“Fidelity is here not a virtue, but a crime,” said Jacintha. “No tie, no obligation can bind you to be accomplices in cruelty and injustice.”

“I shall enter into no argument with you, young lady,” replied Jacques. “All I shall say to you is, that I am not to be warped from what I consider my duty, and that therefore you had better try to reconcile yourself to your situation. Come, let me prevail on you to do so,” attempting to raise her as he spoke.

Jacintha resisted the effort, and clung to his wife.

“Will you not compassionate me?” she cried. “Will you not intercede for me? Oh! act to me as you would wish others to act to your daughter, were she in my situation; so may you and yours never want a friend!”

“Dear lady,” said Nannette, “we cannot disobey the commands of those we serve; but depend upon it, every thing that can render you happy

here, we will do. Follow the advice, therefore, of my husband, and try to compose yourself."

"Good heaven!" cried Jacintha, in an agony, "is it then impossible to move you to justice or compassion? Under what pretext am I detained here?"

"'Tis not our business to inquire into the countess's motives for sending you hither," answered Jacques evasively; "all we have to do, is to obey her."

"The time may come," cried Jacintha, starting from her knees, while her eyes lightened with indignation, "when you may have cause to repent that obedience. I am not the unfriended creature you may have been led to imagine; no, I have friends who will follow, who will seek me at the remotest verge of the earth."

"Well, when they seek you here, I have no doubt you will be restored to them," said Jacques, with a deriding laugh; "till then, lady, you must be patient."

The glow which sudden indignation had diffused over the cheek of Jacintha, faded from it; her heart again sunk in terror and despondence; and throwing herself upon a chair, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

Nannette attempted to administer consolation, but was interrupted by Jacques, who, on Jacintha's turning disdainfully from her, exclaimed, in an indignant tone, "Come, come, Nannette, I desire you may not intrude your kindness upon the young lady; wait till she is sensible of the value of it."

He then insisted on his family's retiring with him, and leaving Jacintha to her own reflections.

"Am I really awake?" cried Jacintha, uncovering her face, as they withdrew from the room, and

looking wildly round it, "or am I in a frightful dream? Alas, no!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, "I am too surely inveigled from my friends, remote from all who love....who are interested about me. And is it the authors of my being who have doomed me to wretchedness? Is it my mother, from whom I had a right to expect tenderness...is it my father, from whom I should have experienced protection, that have consigned me to misery...to misery, for merely indulging a sweet, a natural hope of finding friends in them? Deceitful hope! would to heaven I had never indulged it! But I will not despair; no," she continued, again throwing herself upon her knees, "I will not despair of deliverance from this unjust captivity. My earthly parents may forsake me, but thou, my heavenly Father, wilt never abandon me, whilst in thee I place my confidence, my trust!"

Soothed by this idea, her mind regained a sufficient degree of composure to permit her to reflect; and she now began to rejoice at what but a short time before she had regretted on her mother's account, namely, having been compelled to acquaint Woodville with the indiscretion of that mother, in order to acquit herself, in his opinion, of that which he suspected her of having committed. This disclosure, together with the knowledge of her having quitted the kingdom with lord Gwytherin, would, she now considered, afford her friends a clue by which they might trace her; and she well knew (from her knowledge of the laws of her country) that lord Gwytherin, though her father, must answer for her safety, which she thought he could scarcely do to the satisfaction of those who inquired after it, without bringing her for-

ward. What motive could have instigated him to consign her to the tyrannic power of the countess, she could not conjecture, since he knew, what perhaps the countess might have doubted, that her solicitude to conceal the secret of her birth, was not greater than their own.

Every sentiment of tenderness and respect which she had ever been inclined to feel for either, was now changed into abhorrence and disgust. Her soul recoiled at the idea of their barbarity and deceit; and she fervently, though involuntarily, prayed she might never behold them again.

She continued alone upwards of an hour; at the expiration of that period, Nannette and Josephine returned, and both, by their looks, even more than their words, evinced their surprise and pleasure at seeing her so much more tranquil than when they had left her.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said Nannette, "this is shewing your wisdom, indeed; nothing can be more foolish than to fret about what cannot be remedied. You'll find that you will be happier here than you expect. Here's a fine noble mansion for you to range about in, and a pleasant walk for you without it, and folks about you all ready to oblige you and serve you. Josephine, in particular, who has taken a great fancy to you, shall be your attendant, and I assure you she is a nice handy little girl."

"What walk is that you have mentioned without the chateau?" asked Jacintha.

"The court beneath the windows of your chamber."

"What! am I to be confined within its narrow bounds?" said Jacintha, who encouraged a hope, that if permitted to wander beyond them, she might find an opportunity of prevailing on some

peasant, by a bribe, to take a letter for her, acquainting Woodville with her situation, to a post-town.

“Such are our orders,” replied Nannette.

“And pray,” asked Jacintha, after a momentary pause, occasioned by the struggling emotions of her soul, “what reason has the countess assigned for confining me here?”

Nannette hesitated for some minutes, and then said she was not at liberty to tell.

“But you can tell whether you think it a sufficient one for depriving me of my liberty.”

Nannette again hesitated, and then replied, she could not give an opinion upon such a subject. “Come, mademoiselle,” she added, “let me make your breakfast, and don’t trouble yourself with making inquiries which cannot be answered.

“You can have no objection to inform me when mademoiselle Dupont departed, I suppose,” said Jacintha.

“No; she went away at an early hour this morning.”

“And only from her you received your intelligence respecting me?”

“Only from her,” said Nannette.

“Treacherous creature!” involuntarily exclaimed Jacintha. “Yet let me not,” she reflected, “condemn her unheard; she may, perhaps, have been imposed upon by a fabricated tale.”

Whilst making breakfast, Jacintha made another effort to interest Nannette in her favour, but, like her former efforts, it was unsuccessful; and she, at length, determined to desist from supplications which she perceived would render her confinement more insupportable, by exciting a greater degree of watchfulness in her gaolers, and endea-

your to support, with patience and fortitude, what she trusted would prove temporary imprisonment. Her mind, however, during the day, underwent many revolutions. Alternately it experienced the elevation of hope, and the depression of despair. Sometimes fearing that lord Gwytherin and the countess might be able to devise such a scheme, as would either prevent, or put a stop to the inquiries of her friends; then again flattering herself that nothing short of the most unequivocal proofs of her fate, would silence their anxious solicitude about her.

From the attention of Jacques and his family, she concluded the countess had ordered her to be treated with respect. To interested motives, however, more than to any order of the countess, she was indebted for this attention. They flattered themselves, by it they should obtain some part of those valuable things, which she herself, by offering them as a recompense for the restoration of her liberty, had acknowledged being in her possession.

The parlour in which she had supped with mademoiselle Dupont, was appropriated solely to her use, and Josephine was appointed to attend her.

There was an innocence, a simplicity in the manners of this young girl; and expression of tender pity in her countenance, which rendered her pleasing to Jacintha, who tried, by conversing with her, to divert herself from the contemplation of her own unhappiness.

The rest of the family she regarded with distrust and apprehension. The traces of cruelty and cunning were discernible in their countenances, and she could not avoid considering them as the ready instruments of treachery and oppression. In

thinking so she was not mistaken ; and in confiding her to their care, the countess well knew she had nothing to fear from their humanity.

Jacintha was represented to them as a distant relation of the countess, entrusted to her protection, for the express purpose of having her confined for life, in consequence of some indiscretions she had committed in England, and which her friends had every reason to apprehend her repeating, if she regained her liberty.

It was now necessary to explain the motives which induced lord Gwytherin to act so cruel and perfidious a part towards Jacintha.

END OF VOLUME III.

# NOCTURNAL VISIT,

## A TALE.

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BY MARIA REGINA ROCHE,

AUTHOR OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ABBEY, MAID OF  
THE HAMLET, VICAR OF LANSDOWNE, AND  
CLERMONT.

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" 'Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,  
" 'That I will speak to thee.'"

SHAKSPEARE.

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VOL. IV.

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# NOCTURNAL VISIT.

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## CHAP. I

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“ Mournful is the tale  
“ Which ye so fain would know.”

HERMIT OF WARKWORTH.

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THE countess, apprehensive of unpleasant consequences to herself, from Jacintha's being acquainted with the secret of her birth, appointed an interview with lord Gwytherin, for the purpose of endeavouring to prevail upon him to resign her entirely into her (the countess's) hand, and thus give her an opportunity of preventing what she apprehended. As a means of prevailing upon him to accede to this measure, she solemnly assured him, if he consented to it, she would enable him to free himself from the difficulties which, from private information, she knew had alone made him think of an union with her....an union to which she candidly confessed her abhorrence.

Lord Gwytherin finding her resolutely bent on rejecting his hand, at last came into her terms ; previously stipulating, however, that he should be acquainted with the fate to which she had destined Jacintha. This she accordingly revealed, and, callous as he was to the feelings of humanity, he could not

hear it without emotion; or rather, such a pang of remorse at the idea of being accessory to it...at the idea of betraying the confidence which was reposed in him, as scarcely a contemplation of the advantages that would attend his compliance with the countess's wishes, could dissipate.

The countess, on the contrary, still more hardened than he was (for sensibility and principle had long given up the very little ascendancy they had ever possessed over her heart, to ambition and avarice), felt not the slightest compunction at the idea of the lingering misery to which she condemned Jacintha. The self-abatement she felt, in consequence of her birth, made her detest her ere she saw the light; and she would much more willingly have consigned her to the grave (as indeed she would willingly have consigned all who were acquainted with her disgrace) than to the protection of Greville. This detestation, rather strengthened than diminished by time, made her derive a malevolent pleasure from the idea of inflicting pain upon her, and revenging upon the daughter, the injuries she had sustained from the father.

But, exclusive of her aversion to Jacintha, she would have been unwilling to have acknowledged her, lest such an acknowledgment should have led to the discovery of a secret, upon the preservation of which depended a reputation that gave to her the power of triumphing over those who were less fortunate than herself in concealing their indiscretions; and, independent of her strong resentment against lord Gwytherin, she would have declined his hand, in consequence of some private and important reasons she had for wishing to unite herself to the marquis de Montalde; reasons

which, if communicated to lord Gwytherin previous to his quitting England, would have deterred him from visiting France.

In this visit he had desired the company of Jacintha, not for the purpose of promoting her happiness, as he had pretended, but merely from selfish considerations. Her interesting loveliness, he thought, could not fail of awakening all the tender feelings of a mother in the heart of lady Dunsane (of which he judged more favourably than it deserved), and rendering her a successful advocate in his favour.

This idea, and this only, was his inducement for taking her to the continent. About her felicity or welfare, farther than either could have promoted his own, he felt almost totally uninterested, and had entirely banished her from his thoughts, from the moment he learned she was not (as he had supposed, and to which supposition was owing the discovery of her birth) the destined heiress of Mr. Decourcy, until he thought she could be serviceable to him.

His solicitude for an union with lady Dunsane, was not prompted by any revival of his once ardent passion for her, but merely because he knew, from the information of his friend, Mr. Villers, that she had amply the power of extricating him from the embarrassments in which, through the failure of his matrimonial projects in England, he saw himself involved. This failure rose from the unfortunate discovery of his real circumstances; as those who could have brought themselves to overlook the relaxation of his principles, could by no means disregard the deranged state of his affairs.

It required all Jacintha's confidence in heaven, and strength of mind, to support her under her estrangement from her friends, incertitude and anxiety about them, and the dreadful ideas which sometimes started, of a prolonged captivity...ideas, from which she tried to fly, as ones leading to horror and madness. In vain she importuned her keepers to transmit a letter from her to the countess; trusting, if she could get one conveyed to her, containing a solemn assurance of secrecy, and representing the consequences that could scarcely fail of resulting from her detention, she might, perhaps, be able to obtain her enlargement. They were inexorable to all her entreaties; either pretending, or really believing, they should draw upon themselves the displeasure of lady Dunsane, if they complied with them.

Jacintha endeavoured, by making use of all the little resources of amusement within her power, to banish despondence, and prevent unavailing complaints....She had brought some books with her from England, which, with the rest of her things, came with her to the chateau; and with these, and her conversations with Josephine, who every day grew more pleasing to her, she was enabled, not only to diversify her time, but often to dissipate the gloom of reflection.

Under happier circumstances than the present, the magnificent and varied scenery by which she was surrounded, would have been a source of the highest delight and pleasure to her; but it requires a mind at ease to enjoy the charms of Nature. Perturbed as was Jacintha's, there were moments when the wild and beautiful prospects about her habitation, had power to detach her from the contemplation of her unhappiness; and, by inspiring

her with still sublimer sentiments of devotion for the Author of such glorious works, raise in her “an undergoing stomach, to bear up against what should ensue.”

She frequently wished to wander beyond the precincts of the castle ; but this was a wish which, like that relative to the conveyance of a letter to the countess, would not be granted. She did not, however, as more stubborn spirits would have done, disdain a limited indulgence. Some part of every day she passed in walking about the court ; and in the evening, in particular, she liked to saunter about it, and watching from its walls the shepherds in the vale below, collecting their flocks for the night, and listen to their simple music ; for here the Arcadian life was still preserved in all its former purity.

“The flock was regularly penned every evening, to preserve them from the ravages of the wolf ; and the shepherd returned homewards at sunset, with his sheep following him, and seemingly pleased with the sound of the pipe, which was blown with a reed, and resembled the chanter of a bagpipe\*.”

Here Jacintha saw the dreams of fancy, the descriptions of the poet realized, with an admiration, a delight, which often not only soothed, but absorbed her cares, and diffused such a tranquillity over her mind, as permitted her to enjoy the pleasures of imagination....pleasures which, by a kind of magic, can reanimate the drooping soul, render even the captive forgetful of his chains, and irradiate his dungeon ; pleasures, of which it is doubtful whether they do not exceed the reality of those imparted by the possession of what we desire ; pleasures, which can create a paradise around us ; which can give us the perfume of

\* Goldsmith.

flowers, the melody of birds, the mystic murmur of the woods, the tenderness of love, the sympathy of friendship, yea, all that can render life desirable.

But though Jacintha sustained the early period of her confinement with patience and fortitude, when she saw week after week stealing away, without effecting her deliverance, her spirits began to sink into a dejection, which not all her efforts at times could overcome.

As she was traversing her apartment one morning, in one of these melancholy moods, her eye accidentally fell upon a part of the tapestry, which was torn to the bottom, and through the wainscoting, from which it was rent, a stream of light now issued, which evidently proved an aperture in it. She directly approached, to try whether, as she imagined, the panel was loose; and, to her extreme surprise, on pressing her hand against it, it slid back, and discovered a large closet, lit by an arched window at the end.

Attracted by curiosity, Jacintha entered it, and was greatly struck by the singularity of the furniture. An ebony table, of heavy, yet curious workmanship, stood at one side, close to the wall; above it was a crucifix of the same, and upon it a book, richly bound, which, upon examining, Jacintha found to be a missal; while, on either side, were neatly pencilled, several texts from holy writ, and altogether proved, it had been fitted up for prayer and meditation.

Jacintha continued attentively examining all within it, till interrupted by Josephine, who, unexpectedly entering the chamber, ran to her, exclaiming.....

“So, mademoiselle, you have discovered the closet.”

"Is there any reason for wishing it concealed?" asked Jacintha, coming from it.

Josephine hesitated.

"Why, I don't know, mademoiselle: but you had better say nothing about it to my mother," pulling back the panel as she spoke.

"Who furnished it?" asked Jacintha.

"A lady," answered Josephine.

"What lady....the countess of Dunsane?"

"Lord, no," replied Josephine, "I never saw the countess.....she never was here since I was born."

"But the lady who furnished the closet was...."

Josephine shook her head.

"Pray ask me no questions," said she.

"Indeed but I must," cried Jacintha, "and you must answer them."

"I do not wish to disoblige you, mademoiselle," said Josephine; "but if it was known that I told you....."

"It never shall," interrupted Jacintha.

"I pledge my honour not to divulge what you disclose."

"Well, mademoiselle, I will depend upon you; ....but indeed I can give you very little information respecting the poor lady you are inquiring about. She was an inhabitant of this castle before I was born."

"What was her name," eagerly demanded Jacintha, "or her motive for residing here?"

"I assure you I never heard her name: and my parents either could not, or would not let me know the cause of her confinement."

"Confinement!" repeated Jacintha, "what, was she then confined?"

Josephine shook her head.

"Good God !" exclaimed Jacintha, " this is not the first time then, this building has served the purposes of tyranny and oppression."

" Poor lady ! I believe she was hardly used, indeed," said Josephine ; " but, however great her sorrows might have been, she never gave utterance to them. But they were seen in her face, and I learned to pity her when I was but young. Indeed, I should have been ungrateful, if I had not done so, and also loved her sincerely ; for she was kind and gentle to me. I am indebted to her, besides, for almost all I know ; and so is my youngest brother, whom she loved even better than his own mother did."

" Your youngest brother," repeated Jacintha, astonished that so ungracious a being should have attracted such regard.

" Oh, not Claude," replied Josephine, as if she had developed the thoughts of Jacintha, " he is not my youngest brother. You never saw him, for he left this castle before you came to it."

" And he was such a favourite ?"

" Yes ; she taught him many things, which I had no time to learn, from being obliged to assist my mother in domestic concerns ; and to this hour he will weep and lament for her."

" She died, then ?" said Jacintha.

" No."

" She was released, then ?"

" No, she escaped," said Josephine.

" How, in what manner ?" eagerly interrogated Jacintha, in hopes of having some idea suggested to her, which might, perhaps, forward her own escape.

" From a window in this chamber."

" Impossible !" said Jacintha, going to a window, and looking from it. " The height is too

great from the ground, to admit the possibility of an escape this way."

"And yet this is the way she got off," cried Josephine.

"Who were suspected of having aided her escape?" demanded Jacintha,

"Some of the peasants in the valley, to whom, they concluded, she had found means of revealing her situation, were suspected by my father and mother," replied Josephine.

"And was there no search, no inquiry after her?"

"Oh yes," Josephine answered, "but to no effect."

"And how," cried Jacintha, "did those who had confined her, bear the knowledge of her flight?"

"I never heard," replied Josephine. "But, poor lady! had she borne her confinement with patience a little longer, she would have been released without any trouble or danger. She was only gone two days, when a very fine gentleman, who called himself her friend, and was attended by a number of servants, came here, he said, to deliver her; and when he heard she was fled, he raved and stormed, and insisted on searching the whole chateau for her."

"This was strange," said Jacintha, musing.

"'Twas unlucky," cried Josephine. "Poor lady!" added she, with a sigh, "I much fear some dreadful mischance happened to her."

"What reason have you for this fear?" asked Jacintha.

"You'll think me foolish, if I tell you; but I am convinced she met with an untimely death, from the mournful sounds, exactly like those of her voice, which I heard one evening."

“Where?” asked Jacintha, starting.

“From the tower, at the end of the east terrace. As I was walking there one evening, about sunset, I thought I heard a low moaning sound, from a small grated window, which just opens above ground. I stopped to listen, and soon distinguished a voice like her’s. This was sufficient to make me fly back. I told my father and mother what I had heard, and they agreed with me, in thinking it was an intimation of her death; from that hour I have never gone near the place.”

“Never!” repeated Jacintha, in an accent expressive of horror.

“Never,” replied Josephine.

The dreadful surmise, which had but a moment before started in the mind of Jacintha, was now confirmed. It was evident to her, that those who imprisoned the unhappy captive were apprized of her friends having discovered her prison, and had given timely orders for her removal from the apartments she occupied, to a solitary dungeon, where there was no probability of her being sought for. The more she reflected, the more confirmed she became in this conjecture, and that of the innocent and credulous Josephine’s being imposed upon by a fabricated story.

The dreadful idea of being in the power of those who had committed such an atrocious act of cruelty, of those who might again be tempted to perpetrate actions equally inhuman...the dreadful idea of the inquiries and solicitude of her friends, involving her, perhaps, in still greater wretchedness than she already experienced, chilled her heart, and almost overpowered her faculties.

Josephine, observing her change colour, suddenly exclaimed....

“ Bless me, mademoiselle, are you ill ?”

“ Ill,” repeated Jacintha, after a pause, “ no ; but I am affected. Methinks this poor lady’s fate has brought mine before my eyes.”

“ Dear me, mademoiselle, don’t encourage such gloomy ideas ?”

“ How can I avoid doing so,” replied Jacintha, “ when every thing conspires to excite them ? Ah ! Josephine, think how you would feel, if you were in my situation : debarred of liberty, remote from your native country ; and separated from all you love on earth !”

“ To be sure, ’tis very distressing,” said Josephine, with tears in her eyes.

“ And why, my dear Josephine, do your parents join in oppressing the weak and the innocent ?”

“ They are not free agents, mademoiselle,” cried Josephine, with a heightened colour. “ Their all depends on their obedience and fidelity to the countess ; and if they commit an error, ’tis she, who leads them into that error, must be answerable for it. But don’t despair ; your friends, perhaps, may discover your situation, and.....”

“ If they did,” interrupted Jacintha, “ should I be nearer happiness ? Might not the hand which destroyed.....”

Here she recollected herself, and paused as she was on the point of revealing her suspicions concerning the unhappy captive ; about whom, as soon as she recovered from the confusion into which the imprudence she had been so near committing threw her, she asked many questions ; as much to try and divert Josephine from dwelling on the agitation she had manifested, as from curiosity.

Josephine readily answered all those questions. She extolled the beauty, the goodness, the piety, of the unfortunate lady, whose deportment, she said, bespoke her of superior rank.

"The closet you discovered this morning, mademoiselle," she continued, "she fitted up for herself, as a little chapel. Thither she used to retire to her *dévotions*...thither she often brought my brother and me, to make us join in prayer with her, and give us such instructions as, I am sure, will never be obliterated from our minds. 'Tis now four years since she left this castle, and every thing since that period has appeared to me changed within it. The idea of her being so much happier in heaven than she could have been here, is my only consolation for her loss."

"The thoughts of their superior happiness, can indeed be our only consolation for the loss of our friends," replied Jacintha. "Poor lady! I trust she now enjoys a reward for all her sufferings. But tell me, Josephine, did you never, in any manner, discover the source from whence they originated?"

"Never, I assure you, mademoiselle."

"Do you imagine mademoiselle Dupont knew any thing respecting her?" asked Jacintha; the emotion which mademoiselle had betrayed the night she attended her to her chamber, now recurring to her recollection.

"I do believe she did," answered Josephine. "I understand, from my mother, she was always high in the confidence of the earl and countess of Dunsane; an honour which, between ourselves, mademoiselle, I do not envy her."

"Certainly not," said Jacintha; "no honour can compensate for the loss of peace and self-

esteem. Happier, even in the midst of misery, are those whose hearts cannot reproach them with ever having intentionally injured a fellow-creature, than the oppressor of the innocent, though surrounded by all the luxuries of life."

Josephine assented to the truth of this assertion, and then withdrew about her domestic business.

The particulars which she had heard, impressed Jacintha's mind with the deepest gloom and horror. The mysterious words of Mr. Villers, respecting the countess having some private reasons for wishing to keep fair with the marquis de Montalde, seemed now explained. It appeared almost evident to Jacintha, that he was acquainted with the secret relative to the unhappy captive, and that the hand and fortune of the countess were to be his recompence for preserving it.

"And is this inhuman, this unprincipled woman," said Jacintha, "at whose barbarity my soul recoils, is she my mother? A being whom, by the laws of nature, I should have loved and revered! Oh! may penitence precede her death, and lead her to make some expiation for her offences. Gracious heaven! how dreadful the idea of those offences! Unhappy victim of her cruelty! sympathy, as well as compassion, makes me mourn thy fate; for, alas! between it and my own, I behold too great a similitude. Should my captivity end like thine....but no, I will not dwell upon so horrible a thought. Oh God! though I should not live a moment after, let me be restored to my friends! Let my last sigh be breathed upon the bosom of him I love! Let me feel upon my pale cheek that kind domestic

tear, which gives to the expiring heart the sweet assurance of being remembered by those whom it regards !”

Absorbed in melancholy reflections, she sat, pensively leaning her head upon her hand, till roused by an ascending strain of sweet and solemn music. She started from her seat, and hastening to a stone balcony, which stretched before the windows of her chamber, looked towards the place whence the sounds proceeded, and beheld the musician, in the habit of a shepherd, seated on a low-browed rock in the valley, at a little distance from the walls of the chateau, and which formed the base of more stupendous cliffs, whence a wild and purple foliage hung streaming over his head, shadowing him from the rays of a meridian sun. His staff lay beside him, his dog slumbered at his feet, his flock ranged over the flowery pasture uncontrouled, and altogether formed a scene romantic and picturesque.

How a person in his station of life could have acquired such exquisite taste and scientific skill, as he displayed upon the flute, surprised Jacintha ; who, leaning from the balcony, listened to him with the most fixed attention. The gloom of her mind yielding to the powerful enchantment of his strains, and her despondence and terrors gradually giving way to a thrilling sensation of delight, from what she felt, she thought, like the poet, that

- “ Music, sweet artificer of pleasure,
- “ Should not be exercised alone,
- “ In festivals, on hymeneal days,
- “ And in the full assemblies of the happy ;
- “ But rather should its skill be courted

“ In sorrow’s gloomy season, to diffuse  
“ Its smooth allurements through the languid ear  
“ Of self-devour’d affliction, and delude  
“ The wretched from their sadness.”

When the shepherd’s melodious madrigal was over, he raised his eyes from the ground, on which they had hitherto been bent, and, casting a careless glance after his scattered flock, he suddenly turned them towards the chateau, and rested them upon Jacintha. The distance was too great to permit Jacintha to distinguish his features, nor had she any curiosity to do so. She was only interested about his music ; and, wishing him to prolong an amusement which had afforded her so much pleasure, she leaned still more forward, her long tresses flying wild and disordered in the breeze that fluttered round her, and endeavoured, by her gestures, to make him understand those wishes.

He continued to gaze at her for some minutes without moving ; then rising, he took up his staff, and appeared about making some motion to her, when suddenly starting, he looked behind him, and the next instant darted down the valley. Astonished by his precipitate retreat, Jacintha endeavoured, but in vain, to discover the cause of it ; no new object appeared in the valley, to have inspired the alarm which he so evidently betrayed.

A hope of his return induced Jacintha to continue a considerable time at the window, but she saw him no more ; and, by degrees, the pleasing impression his music had made upon her mind, yielded to the painful and still stronger impression made upon it by the circumstances Josephine

had revealed. The horror they had inspired she could not shake off. The fate of the unhappy lady haunted her imagination, and seemed to warn her of her own ; and she shuddered whenever her eyes were involuntarily directed towards the decaying tower, where, she believed, the wretched captive had perished.

Oppressed with terror and melancholy, Jacintha could not behold the decline of day without feeling an increase of both. She marked with sorrow and dismay, the lengthening shadows which proclaimed the approach of that darkness, now dreadful to her imagination, from an idea of the atrocious deeds she believed it had shrouded within the walls of the chateau ; and saw the gleams of sunshine fading from the summits of the cliffs, and the purple glow of evening yielding to the dun shades of night, with the most mournful sensations.

She now expressed a wish for Josephine's company at night ; but, though Josephine herself seconded the wish, her mother positively refused complying with it ; and, to her refusal, Jacintha affixed a fearful meaning.

Unable to sleep, yet still more unable to bear her present thoughts, Jacintha had recourse to a book, to try and divert them, but in vain ; and she sat revolving what she had heard, and what she apprehended, till roused from her meditations by hearing the loud-resounding clock strike the hour of one. Perceiving her fire and lamp almost out, she immediately rose to undress, casting, as she did, a timid glance around the room, which, by the wavering and shadowy light that now gleamed within it, appeared to her more gloomy than it had ever done before, and well suited for the

perpetration of fearful deeds...such deeds, as she had reason to believe had been committed within it. A kind of superstitious terror, till now almost a stranger to her breast, began to pervade it. Unnumbered stories of sheeted spectres, of accusing spirits, rising from the confines of the dead, to reveal enormities practised against them "in their days of nature"....stories which, in the hour of cheerfulness and supposed security, she had denied all credence to, now occurred to her recollection, forcing upon her mind a belief of their probability.

She shuddered inwardly, and with difficulty could bring herself to move from her chair, by the fire, towards the dressing-table, which fronted the bed, the mournful drapery of which was reflected in a large mirror that stood upon it. As she approached it, her eye accidentally glanced upon the sliding panel, which, to her extreme surprise, she now discovered partly pushed back. A dim light shone within the closet, calculated to heighten the unpleasant sensations of Jacintha, and she instinctively hastened to close it. Her efforts to do so, however, were unavailing; and as she was repeating them with still greater energy, a cold hand encountered hers, and suddenly caught it in its grasp! Jacintha shrieked, and instantly fainted.

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CHAP. II.

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"Shepherd, I take thy word,  
"And trust thy offer'd service."

MILTON.

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IT would be difficult to determine whether the terror which had overpowered the senses of Jacintha was lessened or increased, when, on recovering them, she found herself supported in the arms of a young man.

"Oh heaven!" she exclaimed, after a transient glance at him, "for what destiny am I reserved?"

"Be not alarmed, lady," cried he, in a gentle accent; and placing her upon a chair, he knelt before her. "I am not come to injure, but to serve you."

"Serve me?" repeated Jacintha, and looking earnestly at him. She now, by his dress, recognized him to be the shepherd whose delightful music had so entranced her in the morning. "Good God! who are you?...how did you get hither?" she exclaimed.

He informed her he was son to the people who took care of the castle, and gained access to her chamber, by a way unknown to the rest of the family.

"The purpose of my visit, is to offer you my services," said he, "and assist you in making your escape, if you wish to quit this place."

"If I wish to quit it!" said Jacintha. "Gracious heaven! my peace, my happiness, nay, my life itself, I believe," she added, in a kind of inward voice, "depend upon my quitting it. But is it possible," she cried, surveying him with still greater earnestness, "is it possible that thou, so generous and humane, canst, indeed, be the son of people so lost to feeling, so ready to become the instruments of treachery and oppression?"

"Oh, lady!" said he, with downcast eyes and a mournful air, yet with a heightened colour, "Oh, lady! I trust their poverty, and not their will, consents."

"Excuse me," cried Jacintha, recollecting herself; "to censure the parents, is but an ungrateful return to the son for the obligations he would confer upon me. But tell me by what means you can accomplish my escape...tell me by what means you have been inspired with compassion for me."

"On returning, yesterday, to the chateau, from whence I had been some time absent," replied he, rising as he spoke, in compliance with Jacintha's motion, "Josephine, under a promise of secrecy, acquainted me with your confinement in it."

"A promise of secrecy!" said Jacintha.

"Yes. In a few days, my father and mother meant to send me from the castle entirely; and it was settled amongst the family, that I should know nothing of your residence within it."

"Ah!" cried Jacintha, involuntarily, "that is a convincing proof to me that your disposition does not resemble theirs."

"The particulars Josephine communicated," resumed the young stranger, "excited my pity; but when I saw you....."

“How did you contrive to see me?” asked Jacintha.

“I stole to a window which overlooked the court where you were walking. When I beheld you, I .....” (he paused), “I resolved, mademoiselle, to adventure every thing to restore you to liberty.... to a world you were formed to ornament. As soon as I conceived this resolution, I wished to get an opportunity of apprizing you of it, that I might not create alarm, by appearing unexpectedly before you. For this purpose I took charge of a flock, this morning, belonging to my father. I succeeded in drawing you to the window; but at the moment I was about making you a signal, which should give you some idea of my intentions, one of my brothers appeared at a distance, and I was obliged to fly, lest a suspicion should be excited of these intentions, and might cause them to be defeated.”

“But how can I make my escape?” asked Jacintha; “or how avoid again falling into the hands of those who may, nay, will, I am sure, pursue me?”

“The means of your escape are easy,” said he, “and in my power; and at a convent, about seven miles from this, you can obtain refuge, till the pursuit that will be made after you, is over.”

“Are you certain,” demanded Jacintha, “that I shall be received into the convent?”

“Yes; 'tis bound by the rules of its order to give succour and shelter to all who need them, else many might perish from necessity and unexpected mischances, in these dreary and but thinly inhabited regions.”

Jacintha bent her eyes to the ground without speaking. A vague suspicion crossed her mind,

and she hesitated how to act ; but this hesitation was over, and the suspicion which caused it, vanished, when again looking at the young stranger, again fastening her eyes upon him with the most scrutinizing earnestness, she beheld candour and benevolence in every line of his countenance ; eyes that sparkled with sensibility and sweetness ; and a brow, upon which, as Juliet says of Romeo's,

“ Shame would have been asham'd to sit.”

“ No,” she said to herself, “ 'tis impossible this countenance can veil the dark purposes of an unworthy heart.”

Hope and confidence again sprung up within her. “ Her soul became resolved, the tear was dried from her wildly-looking eye, and a troubled joy rose on her mind, like the red path of the lightning on a stormy cloud.”

“ I accept your services,” cried she, starting from her chair, “ with gratitude ; and may heaven requite you for your kindness to me !”

“ Ah, lady ! the knowledge of having served you, will be a sufficient requital to me. But hasten, lady ; the gray dawn already begins to streak the east.....my father and brothers rise early, and.....”

Jacintha, starting at the idea he suggested, hastened to her trunk, and having made up a small bundle of necessaries, she wrapped her pellisse about her, and gave him her hand. He led her into the closet, near the window of which Jacintha perceived a panel, similar to that in the chamber, slid back, and beyond it a narrow flight of stone steps, that wound between the thick walls of the castle, and terminated in a door, which opened into the court. From this door they crossed to a smaller one at the side of the court, almost hidden

by the weeds which grew without it, and which Henri, not without difficulty, opened with a key he took from his pocket, and Jacintha found herself upon the edge of a steep descent, overlooking the romantic valley she had so often admired from her windows, now dimly seen through the shadows of night. Henri supported and guided her down the intricate path, which ended in it, and near the foot of which she saw two mules, ready bridled and saddled, and tied to a tree.

Surprise, at finding the plan of her escape so well arranged, made her lift her eyes to Henri's face, and again an unpleasant doubt obtruded on her mind, which again vanished, however, before the confidence his unembarrassed looks inspired.

"Now, mademoiselle," cried he, taking hold of the bridle of the mule upon which he had lifted her, and mounting himself, "now, mademoiselle," as they commenced their journey, "like you, I hope, I am bidding a last farewell to yon dreary pile."

Jacintha, in astonishment, repeated these words; and Henri informed her that his parents, having chosen a situation in life for him not by any means consonant to his inclination, he was quitting them for the purpose of avoiding it.

The interest he had excited in the bosom of Jacintha, by his conduct towards her, led her to inquire into his intentions respecting his future destiny. He explicitly answered her inquiries, apparently pleased with her having made them.

It was his intention, he said, to endeavour to procure a settlement in the East-Indies, where he trusted, by his laudable exertions, to obtain that happiness, which he had vainly sought in his native country, amongst his own connections.

Encouraged by the profound attention Jacintha paid to what he said, an attention so expressive of the interest she felt in his concerns, he proceeded to give a little history of himself; and Jacintha found he had never been a favourite of his parents, and owed whatever felicity he had enjoyed in life, to the unfortunate lady who had been confined in the chateau.

Jacintha, without violating the promise she had given Josephine, of never divulging what she had communicated relative to the unhappy captive, had now an opportunity of making such inquiries as her strong anxiety about her fate dictated.

Henri, however, and Jacintha could not doubt his assertions, professed himself utterly ignorant of the origin of her misfortunes, the means by which she had effected her escape, and her destiny since it had taken place.

"At the time she quitted the chateau," said he, "I was absent from it; my father having sent me upon a visit to his brother in Gascony, a few weeks previous to her disappearance."

"Ah!" thought Jacintha, "you were purposely sent out of the way."

"On my return," continued he, "I was diligent in my search and inquiries after her, but both were unavailing. I cannot, however, divest myself of the idea of her death. Peace to her spirit," said he, after a momentary pause, "whether an inhabitant of this world or the next! Whilst memory holds her seat within my breast, the gratitude with which she has inspired me, can never be obliterated. To her, as I have already told you, mademoiselle, I am indebted, not only for happiness, whatever I experienced at home, but such information, such knowledge, as I trust, will enable me to steer through

life with honour. But for her, my mind would have been rude and uncultivated as my native mountains. Ah, mademoiselle ! how often does what we consider a misfortune, turn out a blessing ! Surely this reflection should render us patient under our various trials. The neglect and harshness of my parents, which I conceived to be so unfortunate a circumstance, was in reality a fortunate one for me, since it procured me her pity, which, by degrees, ripened into an affection that led her to instruct my ignorance."

"And were your parents pleased at your acquiring such superior advantages to the rest of their children."

"By no means ; they wished to have prevented it. But disobedience here, I thought no crime ; and having accidentally discovered the secret passage to her closet, I used it for the purpose of receiving her lessons."

"'Tis strange," said Jacintha, "that, in the course of your conversations, she never dropped a hint concerning the cause of her misfortunes. The oppressed heart finds relief in venting its complaints."

"To her God, alone, she addressed them," replied Henri.

The more Jacintha conversed with this young man, the more strongly interested she became about him. She saw in him one of Nature's own children ; a mind active, candid, enthusiastic, prompt to obey the call of humanity, and regardless of any dangers incurred to benefit others. His appearance bespoke his sentiments. His mien was lofty, graceful, commanding ; and, though the down of youth still shaded his cheek, the expression

of his countenance was bold, intrepid, and animated.

But, ardent as was the gratitude of Jacintha, the interest which it excited in her bosom for him was faint, compared to that which love and admiration created in his breast for her. The moment he beheld her, his heart paid her homage, as one of the most lovely of her sex. He utterly discredited the tale told to her disadvantage; he saw

“ The beauties of her mind  
“ Reflected in her face,”

and became confirmed in the resolution he had previously conceived, of liberating her from her cruel and unjust captivity. How the adventure might end, he did not permit himself to think.

As they journeyed on, he could not avoid dropping a hint, expressive of curiosity, to learn the real cause of her confinement. This, Jacintha explicitly declared, she was not at liberty to reveal, begging him to believe that the confidence which his conduct towards her gave him a right to expect, she would not withhold, had she not been under a solemn obligation to do so.

He informed Jacintha it was his intention to secrete himself near the convent, till there was a probability of the pursuit after them being over; and desired to know whither she meant to proceed on quitting it, declaring, not only his readiness, but determination to attend her, till he had left her in a place of safety.

Jacintha gratefully thanked him for this determination, which relieved her mind from many apprehensions that began to invade it; and she rejoiced to think, through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, she had the means of preventing

him from suffering any pecuniary inconvenience by attending her.

And now the dusky shades of night began to be withdrawn, and gradually

“ The dripping rock, the mountain’s misty top,  
“ Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.”

The travellers soon after entered from a plain into the deep recesses of a forest, through which they had not proceeded far, when the receding trees gave to their view a beautiful glade, covered with a smooth and vivid verdure, and ending in a gentle acclivity, crowned with the ancient convent to which they were repairing. Though discoloured by time, a wild and romantic scenery of green hills, and intermingled cliffs, tinted with purple hues, and disclosing the course of many a wandering stream, tended to relieve its gloom, and create pleasing sensations.

Nature seemed to have designed this place for religious meditation. Here Silence and Solitude held their “unmolested reign.” The gurgling of the water which flowed through the glade, the lowing of the cattle that fed upon its margin, the rustling of the trees, and the responsive songs of the birds, were the only sounds which met the ear; and from the eye all prospects was excluded, by the thick woods which extended on either side, save that of the romantic mountains veiling their aspiring summits in the clouds.

The tranquillity of the scene was soothing to the agitated spirits of Jacintha, and gradually communicated itself to her bosom.

At the entrance of the forest, she and Henri, as had previously been agreed on, alighted, and proceeded on foot to the convent; Henri meaning to claim admittance for her there, under the pretext

of the carriage they were travelling in having broken down, and consequently disabling them from pursuing their journey, till he could get it repaired at some one of the neighbouring hamlets.

He prepared her to answer any questions that might be put to her, and assured her, the moment he imagined she might leave her retreat with safety, he would come for her, and reconduct her towards her native country ; to which (with a sigh, he added) he saw she was so impatient to return.

Jacintha repeated her fervent thanks, attempting, as she spoke, to put her pocket-book into his hands, with an entreaty for him to consider its contents as a mutual stock. This he absolutely refused doing, and in a manner too which evidently proved his feelings to be hurt by the request, and somewhat embarrassed Jacintha ; she resolved, however, on persisting in her intentions, and regretted that time, at present, would not admit of her urging the matter as she wished.

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CHAP. III.

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“ Oh ! take this virgin to thy care,  
“ Good angels be her guard !  
“ And may the saints in heaven above,  
“ That pious care reward !”

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THE matin bell rung out as they approached the convent, and, within a few paces of it, they heard, from the interior of the building, the sweet and solemn chanting of female voices, accompanied by the deep-toned organ. Jacintha involuntarily paused to listen. Never had she heard, from any “mortal mixture of earth’s mould,” such divine, enchanting ravishment as the present ....never before did music so powerfully affect and delight her. The ardour of devotion kindled within her heart, her bosom glowed, and, with the choral symphonies of the assembled virgins, her thoughts ascended to heaven, in praise of him to whom all nature, at this early hour, seemed paying homage.

On knocking at the gate, a portress appeared, and demanded their business. Henri informed her, and she directly left them, without opening it, to call a lay-sister, with whom she returned. They were now admitted into the court, which was surrounded by a high wall, covered with aromatic shrubs, glittering with dew, and perfuming the air. The nun conducted them into

a small parlour, where she left them ; but returned in a few minutes with the lady abbess's permission for Jacintha's being lodged in the convent.

Henri now rose to take his leave, and as soon as he had departed, the nun led Jacintha under an old " ivy-mantled arch," into an inner court, round which the cloisters were built, surmounted by the heavy walls of the edifice, into which various small doors from the cloisters opened.

The morning service was by this time over, and Jacintha, as she followed the steps of her guide, met several of the nuns passing from the church (the " moss-clad spire" of which was eminently conspicuous above the rest of the building) to the refectory. They examined her with a scrutinizing earnestness, which convinced Jacintha that curiosity was not amongst the worldly passions they had conquered. Every eye, indeed, seemed attracted by her appearance ; for, perhaps,

" Never their holy fane  
" Did fairer maiden grace."

Through a small door-way, in a remote corner of the court, Jacintha was conducted up a narrow flight of stone stairs, to a long and dismal gallery, near the entrance of which she was shewn into a little bed-chamber. Here the nun offered to bring her some refreshments.....the refreshment of sleep, however, was most needful to Jacintha at present, and she declined taking any thing till she had tried to recruit her wearied frame, and still more exhausted spirits, by repose. The nun accordingly retired, having first shewn her a bell, which she desired her to ring when she needed her attendance.

The sweet consciousness of security, for which her heart swelled with gratitude to heaven, soon enabled Jacintha to enjoy the repose she required ; and she awoke from a sleep of some hours, with very different feelings from those she had latterly experienced.

But these feelings were soon damped by reflecting on the many unpleasant circumstances which perhaps awaited her return to England....by reflecting that, except Egbert had returned to it, she had neither friend, nor home, to receive her in her native country.

She did not long, however, indulge the melancholy these reflections inspired, without struggling against it. She thought it like a doubt of the goodness of Providence, the protection of that Being, of which she had received so recent an instance ; and she resolved sedulously to try and banish all anticipations of evil, and, by still placing her implicit confidence in heaven, endeavour to render herself deserving of its care.

With astonishment she reviewed all she had lately gone through. So strange, so romantic appeared the late events of her life, that, but for the convincing proofs she had of their reality, she would have been inclined to believe they owed their sole existence to a disordered imagination.

She was too deeply engaged in thought to think of ringing for some time after she had risen ; when she did, the lay-sister obeyed her summons, and led her into an adjoining apartment, where she brought her refreshments. This room, like the one she had quitted, was furnished with the greatest simplicity, and, like it, commanded a view of the extensive gardens, laid out in embowered

walks and dark recesses, fit haunts for meditation ; and enclosed on every side by high and beetling cliffs, apparently insurmountable.

Jacintha ate her frugal meal alone. By the time, she supposed, she had finished it, the nun returned, and proposed introducing her into the presence of the lady abbess ; a customary ceremony, Jacintha understood, for the purpose of returning her ladyship thanks for the shelter she afforded.

Jacintha was rather pleased, than otherwise, at the idea of going through this ceremony, as she had a curiosity to see every thing, and every one belonging to a convent. She accordingly followed the nun through several windings and turnings, to a spacious parlour, furnished in a style Jacintha little expected to have seen in such a building. Here the lady abbess sat ; and, if the costly decorations of her apartment surprised Jacintha, the but ill-disguised arrogance and ostentation of her manner, still more astonished her ; so unlike the meekness and humility, which should have characterized a cloistered votaress, whose vow extends not only to a renunciation of the pleasures, but the pomps and vanities of life.

Though evidently past her meridian, she still retained a large portion of beauty. Her smooth brow, proved her to have been a stranger to care ; and her unfaded cheek, an equal stranger to rigid abstinence. Her dress was so contrived as to set off her charms to the best advantage ; her veil devolved in graceful folds upon the ground, and her robe was bound tight round her waist, to shew its symmetry.

She merely returned the low obeisance of Jacintha with a slight inclination of her head ; but, as soon as she had received from her the acknow-

ledgments she expected, she assumed an air of graciousness, more calculated, however, to humble than exalt, and motioning for her to advance further into the room, began, still however keeping her standing, to put many interrogatories to her ; which Jacintha, but for Henri's precaution, in preparing her for them, would have found it difficult to reply to.

Her being a foreigner, neither she nor Henri had ever thought of concealing ; and the abbess, in consequence of hearing she had never before seen the interior of a convent, desired her (in a manner evidently intended to prepossess Jacintha with favourable sentiments, and persuade her to believe that the state she assumed was on account of her situation, not from her real disposition) to be shewn every thing worthy of observation.

In pursuance of this command, Jacintha was conducted by a nun, whom she found at her entrance into the parlour, to various parts of the building, and to the church, which was rich in sculpture and paintings ; but though her curiosity was gratified, her mind was unavoidably saddened by the mournful solemnity which presided over all she saw, and by beholding so many fellow-creatures excluded from the social sweets of life, destined to wither in cheerless retirement....“ to pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast.” How the heart of man could ever have engendered a superstition so dreadful, as to believe the God of mercy and compassion could find pleasure in these human sacrifices, filled her with astonishment and horror, and she inwardly shuddered as she surveyed its victims.

From the church she was led into the gardens, where, she was told, she might range at pleasure. This information was extremely agreeable, as she feared being restricted entirely to the narrow limits of the chambers appropriated to her use.

As she was retracing a long embowered walk, which fronted the building, with the nun, who had been her conductress to such parts of it as she visited, her attention was attracted by a tower, which terminated one end, and appeared infinitely more ancient than the rest of the edifice. So rugged and discoloured indeed were its walls by time, that it seemed more like a huge rock, hewn into something like an human structure by the hand of art, than a structure reared by the hand of art itself. That kind of vegetation, which announces the decay it hides, grew thick about its battlements; and round the deep indentures made for its grated windows, the long grass whistled mournfully to the wind.

With a shuddering sensation, which she could only account for by the idea of cruelty and oppression which it excited in her mind, and for the purposes of which it appeared so peculiarly adapted, Jacintha gazed upon this building; and, after a pause of some minutes, asked whether it was ever inhabited.

"Sometimes," replied the nun, in an emphatic voice; and Jacintha thought the pale rose, which bloomed upon her cheek, grew paler.

"What a dismal habitation!" said Jacintha.

"Dismal indeed," repeated the nun.

"And is it necessity or choice which causes it, at times, to be inhabited?" inquired Jacintha.

"Neither," replied the nun, with quickness; and then, evidently from a fear of being led into

some imprudent communication, formed a pretext for leaving Jacintha, and withdrew to the convent.

Her words, or rather manner, conjured up in the mind of Jacintha an idea, of this building being still used for the purposes for which it seemed originally intended.

“ Yet this cannot be the case,” thought she, after reflecting some minutes ; “ for punishment is seldom inflicted without some cause, real or imaginary ; and what cause can be given for its infliction here, where there is no temptation to swerve from the most rigid virtue ? ”

Again she reflected, and suddenly it occurred to her, that perhaps some of the holy sisters might have been unwilling victims, and doomed to suffer for their murmurs, by a solitary confinement within the decaying tower. This thought had scarcely occurred, ere she became confirmed in thinking she was right in her conjecture ; and she involuntarily turned, with mingled indignation and horror, from the spot, congratulating herself on being the inhabitant of a country, alike equitable and mild in its religion and its laws.

Anxious to avoid the sight of a building, where, as she imagined, misery moaned, and poor misfortune felt the lash of tyranny, she wandered away to a remote part of the garden, where, finding a stone bench near the entrance of an arbour, she seated herself, and endeavoured to divert the unpleasant thoughts that had arisen in her mind, by perusing a little book of poetry which she found in her bundle, and which, as the gift of Egbert, had been her constant companion in her confinement. The following poem, however, at which she opened, was not calculated to produce the effect she desired.....

THE flocks, extended on the mountains, lay ;  
The feather'd songsters ceas'd their cheerful strains ;  
The herds no longer round the meadows stray,  
And solemn silence reigns throughout the plains.

The rising moon diffus'd a silv'ry gleam,  
And glitt'ring stars their friendly glories join'd ;  
A time reflection aids religion's theme,  
And pensive cares increase upon the mind.

'Twas then young Edward took his pensive way,  
The still church-yard, with trembling step and slow ;  
Where his lov'd Phillis moulder'd into clay,  
He sought, distracted with excess of woe.

The turf, new rais'd, seem'd willing to declare  
Where, deep in earth, the beauteous maid reclin'd ;  
He saw, quick started forth the sudden tear,  
And thus his words betray'd his tortur'd mind.....

- " See where, regardless of this silent tear,  
" 'The lovely Phillis sleeps in soft repose ;  
" Ah ! what avail my anguish, my despair,  
" She sleeps, unconscious of my dreadful woes !  
" Ah ! why did Heav'n so fair a form bestow ?  
" Why was she bless'd with more than mortal charms ?  
" To serve, alas ! but to augment my woe,  
" And add new horrors to my widow'd arms !  
" Her face was lovely as the op'ning day ;  
" Sweet was her breath as autumn's rich perfume ;  
" Her voice, melodious as the linnet's lay ;  
" Her cheeks outvied the rose's brightest bloom,  
" So the young bud bedecks the virgin thorn,  
" Whilst deep within a venom'd canker lies,  
" With fragrance sweet, salutes the rising morn,  
" Ere night, alas ! untimely blasted, lies !  
" Some goddess, envying her superior charms,  
" Some god, repining at my happier fate,  
" With jealous fury snatch'd her from my arms,  
" And frantic urg'd th' unwilling hand of Fate.

“ Slow on her frame a ling’ring sickness seiz’d,  
“ O’er her weak limbs a deadly paleness spread,  
“ Her eyes no more their sprightly fire display’d,  
“ And from her cheek the gay vermilion fled.

“ Sudden, alas ! would flattering hopes arise,  
“ And long-lost Health seem blooming o’er her face ;  
“ But, ha ! too soon the fond delusion flies,  
“ And to Despair, reluctant yields her place.

“ Faint, weary, pale, she bow’d her languid head,  
“ Unequal Nature yielding to the strife ;  
“ Calm, by degrees, she sunk amongst the dead,  
“ And, sweetly smiling, languish’d into life !

“ Adieu, ye lawns ! adieu, ye flow’ry meads !  
“ Ye groves, ye partners of our love, adieu !  
“ Phillis no more your painted carpet treads,  
“ No more her eyes your varied prospects view.

“ Welcome the silence of the midnight hour,  
“ This solemn scene, this glimm’ring ray of light ;  
“ My soul, deprest by Fate’s relentless pow’r,  
“ Enjoys this hour with a sad delight.

“ Oh ! would kind Heaven indulge my ardent pray’r,  
“ Life, hated life, with transport I’d resign ;  
“ Glad, in the grave, I’d lose my torturing care,  
“ Whom death has parted, death alone can join !”

“ Ah !” cried Jacintha, “ how agonizing to weep over the grave of those we love ; yet, how much more agonizing,” and her thoughts reverted to the tower, “ to know the object of our tenderest affection survives, but to experience the horrors of confinement and despair !”

Wrapped in pensive meditations, she remained in the garden long after the bell for vespers had tolled, regardless of the dusky hue which gradually stole upon the blue expanse, and veiled the beauties of the surrounding scenery.

At length a nun approached, to inform her the gates of the convent were about being closed for the night. Jacintha immediately quitted her sequestered seat, and followed her to the cloisters, where the nun, who had heretofore been her attendant, met and conducted her to her chamber; in which she continued with her till she had supped. On being left alone, Jacintha soon sought to obtain, in sleep, a refuge from the gloomy ideas which oppressed her; sleep, however, could not dissipate them, and the wild and terrific dreams to which they gave rise, harassed her spirits, and made her forsake her couch at the first dawn of day.

Breakfast, like her other meals, was served in the adjoining apartment, and she found, that all society, or even converse with the nuns, except it was accidental, was prohibited. She did not revisit the garden till she saw they had quitted it to attend their mid-day devotions; she then repaired to it.

Again her eyes involuntarily rested on the black tower, and she paused to re-examine its massy structure, vainly wishing for power to penetrate within its dark recesses, and relieve the wretchedness which, perhaps, pined within it. Whilst thus she stood, in a melancholy and contemplative attitude, before it, to her inexpressible astonishment she suddenly beheld a white handkerchief suspended through the iron bars of a small window, a few yards above the ground.

Though prepossessed with the idea of its being at this time inhabited, Jacintha started at this moment as if she had seen something supernatural, and remained immoveable till she beheld the handkerchief waving, as if to invite her approach. Almost

instinctively she then stepped forward, but again stopped on observing the handkerchief withdrawn; in the next instant, however, she perceived a hand pushing a folded paper through the bars, which fell upon the ground.

That this was designed for her, Jacintha could not doubt; and having glanced about, to see whether she was observed, she darted to the spot, and catching up the paper, directly concealed it in her bosom; then hastening to another part of the garden, though with trembling limbs, and a heart that fluttered as if it would burst from her bosom, she took a few turns, and returned to her chamber, without meeting any of the nuns. The moment she regained it, she drew forth the paper, which appeared to be a leaf torn from a pocket-book, and read the following lines, pencilled in English.....

“If your countenance be the index of your mind, you will compassionate the misery of an unfortunate fellow-creature and country-woman, treacherously separated from all she loves on earth, and cruelly doomed to linger out the residue of her days in this solitary convent.

“Oh, stranger! this doom may, through your means, be reversed, if you will give me an opportunity of acquainting you with such particulars of my sad story, as may enable you to inform my friends in Britain of my situation; but this opportunity can only be granted, by your visiting the place of my confinement. To do this, you may perhaps be unwilling, from an apprehension of danger; but no danger can be incurred by such a measure, since there is no probability of its being discovered. The gallery in which you lodge, is remote from the one occupied by the nuns, being

entirely appropriated to the use of any wandering strangers who may require the shelter of this convent. It terminates in a small door, which opens upon a narrow flight of stairs that descend into the church ; and exactly opposite the foot of these stairs is another door, which leads into the tower where I am confined, but so artfully contrived, as not to appear to casual observation, what it really is ; you will know it, however, by a frame of wood-work which surrounds it, and into which, on the right side, the bolt that secures it, projects. At the hour of one, when all the convent is likely to be wrapped in repose, you may safely visit me. Oh, do not determine against coming, I conjure you ! Oh, do not refuse realizing the hope your appearance excited ! So may Heaven bless and prosper you, and peace and happiness go with you, hand in hand, through life !”

The feelings of Jacintha's mind, on perusing these lines, can better be conceived than described : surprise, pity, and apprehension, all took their turn to reign, and for some time she was irresolute how to act. Humanity at length ended this irresolution, by determining her to visit the wretched captive ; yet, at the very moment she formed this determination, her heart sunk within her, at the idea of (she believed) the perilous undertaking. She endeavoured, however, to revive its courage, by reflecting on the very little probability there was of any of the inhabitants of the convent being up at the hour appointed for the visit, and consequently the little risk she should run, of encountering danger by it.

“ And surely any pain attendant on the apprehension of danger, must be trifling,” she cried, “ compared to that which I should feel, if I per-

mitted selfish considerations to render me regardless of the supplications of misery, and thought a fellow-creature groaned in captivity whom I might, by an exertion of courage, have been instrumental to delivering from it; such a thought would forever destroy my happiness. Oh God! what an ungrateful return should I make for the restoration of my liberty, if I refused trying to restore to another a similar blessing! Yes, unhappy woman! I will, on thy account, endeavour to overcome all apprehensions, and act to thee as, a few short days ago, I should have wished, have prayed some friendly mortal to have acted towards myself."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed she, after the pause of a few minutes, "should this be the unfortunate lady who was so long confined within the castle! Ah! if it should be her, indeed, how will the glowing heart of her pupil rejoice, when he hears his kind instructress lives....lives in expectation of being restored to freedom!"

The pleasing images which this idea gave to the mind of Jacintha, tranquillized it, and she almost felt impatient for the hour which was to introduce her to the captive.

She remained in the apartments assigned to her the remainder of the day, without seeing any person except the attending nun, who, as usual, brought her solitary meals, and a lamp at night.

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CHAP. IV.

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" All hope of succour but from thee, is past !"

DRYDEN.

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WITH darkness the fears of Jacintha again returned ; and, as she shut herself up in her little cell, she involuntarily began to ruminate on the dreadful situation in which she would, in all probability, be involved, should the enterprize she meditated, be discovered. Before the review of this situation, her resolution began to waver ; yet, when she reflected on the very little likelihood there was, of the discovery she dreaded taking place, and, above all, on the wretchedness she should experience, if she could reproach herself with having refused trying to serve a suffering fellow-creature, she once more determined on persevering in her charitable intentions.

With a fluttering heart she heard the bell for midnight prayers ; with a still more agitated heart she heard the deep-toned clock striking the hour of one. When its solemn reverberation was over, she rose, and going to the door, softly opened it, and stepped into the gallery to listen. She scarcely breathed, from her strong anxiety to try and ascertain whether there was any one up in the convent ; she soon, however, had reason to believe

all its inhabitants were wrapped in repose, for

“ Nor eye, nor listening ear, an object found.”

Silence and Darkness, solemn sisters twain, seemed now to reign within the building.

Jacintha returned into the chamber for her lamp, and again stepped forth. She had not proceeded many yards, however, when she

“ Back recoil’d,  
“ Even at the sound herself had made.”

Shuddering, she stood immoveable for some minutes ; re-assured, then, by finding her fancy had deceived her, and that it was the echo alone of her own steps which, “ had pierced the fearful hollow of her ear ;” she again moved onwards, nor paused till she came to the door that terminated the gallery. Here she lingered a short time, scarcely able to prevail upon herself to descend the stairs, which seemed to terminate in impenetrable gloom.

At last she ventured forward, clinging to the banisters, and trembling lest the wind, which came in sudden gusts from the sides, should extinguish her lamp. A pale twilight gleamed through the windows of the church, much more calculated to affect the imagination, than the profound darkness of the gallery.

Oppressed with terrors she had never before experienced, Jacintha advanced from the foot of the stairs, starting, and often pausing to look back, as the lonely aisles echoed her steps and almost made her imagine she was followed.

With difficulty her trembling hands enabled her to unbolt the door leading into the tower, and which disclosed to her view a small hall terminated by a narrow flight of stairs ; these stairs she be-

gan to ascend in the utmost trepidation, chilled to the very heart, not more by apprehension, than the cold and dampness of the place. Scarcely had she gained the top, ere a wild scream burst upon her ear, and a female figure rushed from an opposite apartment, and fell, trembling, at her feet.

The variety of emotions which assailed the heart of Jacintha, rendered her for some minutes unable to speak or move; then recollecting her perilous situation, she tried to exert herself, and setting the lamp upon the ground, endeavoured to raise the prostrate stranger. Her efforts soon succeeded. The unhappy captive, by her assistance, slowly rose, and discovered to her view a countenance which, notwithstanding the too visible ravages of time, sorrow, and sickness, still retained the most interesting expression, and a faint vestige of primeval beauty.

She gazed a few minutes in silence upon Jacintha; then withdrawing from her support, she took up the lamp, and led the way into the apartment from whence she had come. Jacintha shuddered on entering it, at the idea of a human creature being the inmate of such a place. The rugged walls were covered with green and slimy damps, and its only furniture was a wretched pallet, stretched upon a wooden bedstead; to this the captive feebly moved, and seating herself upon it, she burst into tears: Jacintha followed, and endeavoured to sooth her.

“Kind stranger,” said she, laying her emaciated hand upon Jacintha’s arm as she spoke, “be not distressed at beholding these tears; they are tears of joy....such as I have not, for a long, long period shed, at the prospect that now dawns

upon me, of my deliverance. Say, blessed creature, say, will you indeed exert yourself in my behalf?"

"Would to heaven I could flatter myself that my power to serve you was equal to my inclination," replied Jacintha.

"My feelings were prophetic on beholding you," said the stranger. Something seemed to whisper my heart, that you were thrown in my way by Providence; and joy thrilled through my frame when I heard you were my country-woman."

"Heard!" repeated Jacintha, in extreme surprise.

"Yes; I met you in the cloisters, as I was returning from the matin service. Attracted by your appearance, I inquired of a nun concerning you. But the pleasure her information gave, was soon damped by the abbess's arbitrary command to have me confined in this tower till you had left the convent, lest I should be tempted to disclose to you my unhappy story, and, through your means, obtain an opportunity of acquainting my friends with my situation. That I have been able to obtain this opportunity, I bend in gratitude to heaven."

More affrighted than ever, by hearing of the precaution which was used for keeping the captive and her story from her knowledge, as it tended to prove the dangerous consequences that would result from its being known that she had discovered either, Jacintha earnestly importuned her to be brief in explaining how she could serve her; informing her, at the same time, that she was about returning to England.

"The service I require," she replied, "is to acquaint my friends with my situation."

"But where," demanded Jacintha, somewhat impatiently, "are those friends to be found?"

"Where," repeated she, with a kind of shuddering horror, as if a fearful thought had that moment started in her mind. "Alas!" cried she, whilst tears again burst from her eyes, "perhaps those dear friends, the hope of whose existence rendered liberty so desirable, are now no more."

"Dear lady," said Jacintha, "hope the best."

She sighed, looked up to heaven, and, after a momentary pause, thus proceeded.

"The family from whom I am descended, is a Scotch one, of the name of Nairn....A letter can scarcely fail of finding some one belonging to it, in its ancient neighbourhood, Inverness; and if the letter falls into the hands of even the most distant of my relatives, I am convinced I shall be redressed."

"And by what name am I to mention you?" asked Jacintha.

"The earl of Endermay is my husband. The most perfidious arts were practised to make him imagine me false to the vow I had plighted to him, and impose upon my friends a belief of my death. Within the solitary walls of this convent, I have passed years of lingering misery, secluded from all that could render life desirable, and kept in ignorance of the fate of those I loved....an ignorance productive of greater torture than any other circumstance. Oh God! how agonizing is incertitude about those we regard....how agonizing to the fond heart of a mother, to be denied the knowledge of her offspring's fate! A thousand times have I implored the barbarians who con-

fined me, to let me know whether my infant, whom they so cruelly snatched from my arms, ere her sweet eyes had well opened upon the light, was in existence, but in vain."

"Then surely," said Jacintha, "you may conclude she still lives; for, it is not natural to suppose, that those who so cruelly confined you, would keep from your knowledge any event that could cause you additional pain."

"Except convinced," replied the unhappy countess, "that the tortures of suspense exceed those which any certainty could inflict."

"Your suspense, your sufferings, will soon, I trust, be happily terminated," said Jacintha. "Depend upon my zeal. Amongst the hours of my life which I shall wish to remember, are those that gave me an opportunity of serving you."

Lady Endermay caught her hand, and pressed it to her lips.

"Say," cried she, gazing upon her, "who you are....whence you come? As you are, my dreams have represented my daughter to be. Such the benignant expression of her eyes....such that look of sweetness which sinks upon the heart."

"Under happier auspices than the present, I trust, dear lady," replied Jacintha, "I shall have an opportunity of telling you who I am. Of this, however, let me assure you, that the self-experience of sorrow has taught me to feel acutely for the woes of others.

"May sorrow henceforth be a stranger to your heart!" said lady Endermay. "May your future destiny be mild as your looks! May the comfort you have given to her, who was ready to perish, never be needed by you! May gladness encompass your steps, and those whom you love requite your

tenderness ! Oh God !" she continued, with uplifted hands, " hear my wishes !"

The tenderness and fervour of her expressions affected Jacintha beyond description. She could not restrain her tears....her heart melted within her, as if at this moment she had been receiving the blessing of a long-lost mother, and she could not forbear reflecting on the different reception she should have met with from lady Endermay, had she been her parent, to that which she had experienced from lady Dunsane.

In a few minutes her emotions subsided, and permitted her to inquire of lady Endermay, whether she had ever been confined in any other place than the convent. Lady Endermay replied in the negative, and thus proved to Jacintha, what indeed she had before suspected, that she was mistaken in imagining her to be the lady who was imprisoned in the chateau.

Having received a more particular direction to her ladyship's friends than she had before, and repeated her promise of losing no time in writing to them, she bade her farewell.

At this moment lady Endermay started up, and grasped Jacintha's hands.

" Remember your promise," she exclaimed. " Remember you have created a hope in my heart, which, if disappointed, will break it ! I know the time at which, if you keep your word, I may expect my deliverance. If that time passes away without effecting it, I can no longer support the burden of existence.....and you," she proceeded, whilst her eyes assumed a wildness of expression which terrified Jacintha, " yes, you will be necessary to sinking me to my grave....and you, like my inhuman persecutors, my accusing spirit will haunt, to reproach you for your deceit !"

"Dear lady, be composed," said Jacintha, "and rely upon my assurances. Let my braving the consequences which scarcely fail of resulting from my visit to you being discovered, prove to you whether or not I am sincere in my wishes to serve you."

"Ah! how could I doubt your sincerity after such a proof!" cried lady Endermay, as if suddenly recollecting herself. "Excuse my doing so ....the unhappy are ever fearful."

"Adieu, dear lady! said Jacintha, kissing her hand. "All that indefatigable zeal can do to hasten your deliverance, shall be done."

Then taking up the lamp, she hastened from the room, followed by lady Endermay to the top of the stairs. On gaining the bottom, Jacintha looked up, waved her hand, and laid it for a moment in expressive silence upon her heart; then advancing to the door which opened into the church, she gently pushed it open, and as gently closed it.

As she was moving from it, she accidentally glanced upon the railing of a small adjoining chapel, between which, with a horror that instantly rivetted her to the spot, she beheld a ghastly countenance earnestly regarding her. From this terrific apparition Jacintha had not power to withdraw her eyes; in a few minutes, however, it gradually disappeared, and she recovered sufficiently from the shock it had given her, to be able to move towards the opposite stairs. But ere she had proceeded many paces, the rustling of drapery made her instinctively look back, and she beheld a tall figure, whose habiliments seemed much better suited for an inhabitant of the grave, than for an inhabitant of this world, following her.

Her faculties again became suspended, the lamp dropped from her hand, and sinking on her knees, she extended her arms in a supplicatory attitude. The figure approached, and at length, in a voice which burst like thunder upon the ears of Jacintha, who immediately recollected it to be the voice of the nun who had shewn her the convent, exclaimed.....

“Stranger, you will dearly pay for this temerity. Be assured there will be a severe scrutiny into this mysterious business.”

The chilling fear which, but a moment before, had awed the heart of Jacintha, and scarcely permitted her to breathe, now gave way to apprehensions that caused it to throb with the utmost violence. The consequences which she had dreaded from engaging in her late enterprize, seemed now ready to overwhelm her; and, unable to speak or move, she remained upon her knees some minutes, looking up in the face of the nun, as if she expected to have heard from her lips, her doom pronounced.

The nun at length, in an austere voice, desired her to rise. Jacintha, instead of obeying this command, suddenly clasped her arms about her, and implored her to forgive an action prompted alone by humanity.

“’Tis not to me,” said the nun, in a haughty and repulsive tone, “to whom you are to address your supplications. I am not the person who is to decide upon your conduct.”

“But you are the only person acquainted with it,” cried Jacintha; “and except you please, it need not transpire.”

“And do you suppose I do not mean it shall?” replied she. “Do you imagine you can prevail

upon me to become the accomplice of deceit? which I should consider myself, if I concealed the late transaction. "No; if you have had the presumption to think so, you have been as much mistaken in that idea, as in believing your rash undertaking would either escape detection, or punishment."

So saying, she burst from the grasp of Jacintha, and again commanded her, with increased haughtiness, to rise.

This indignant treatment roused the spirit of Jacintha, and starting on her feet, she hastily ascended the stairs, followed by the nun; who, in her eager anxiety to acquaint the abbess with what she had seen, utterly forgot the penance she was doing at the time she beheld Jacintha.

Ere Jacintha had reached her chamber, the courage which resentful pride inspired, sunk beneath the dreadful apprehensions which oppressed her. She doubted not having provoked a most rigorous punishment: a punishment against which she could make no resistance. She paused...she looked back on the nun; but the unrelenting severity which marked her countenance, checked the supplication that was ready to burst from the lips of Jacintha; and tottering into the chamber, she threw herself upon the bed, almost suffocated by her emotions.

The nun remained some time in silence at the door; then advancing into the room, she approached the bed, and laying her hand upon Jacintha's arm, told her in a softened voice, she might perhaps be induced to keep the secret she wished her to conceal, if she candidly confessed every thing relative to her visit to the tower. This confession, she assured her, she did not

require for the gratification of her curiosity (as that was already satisfied by having overheard the whole conversation between her and the captive, in consequence of being in the church at the time she entered it, and following her into the tower); but merely to prove, whether she was sufficiently sincere and honourable to be worthy of consideration and forbearance.

Jacintha could not doubt the truth of this latter assertion, which was uttered with the utmost solemnity; and starting from the bed, she candidly revealed all that had passed between her and lady Endermay; fully removing the suspicion, she found, by the further interrogatories of the nun, was entertained, of her having been introduced into the convent, for the purpose of trying to obtain an opportunity of conversing with the countess.

The moment she had concluded her narrative, the nun abruptly quitted the room, and locking the door after her, left Jacintha to experience all the violent emotions that alternate hope and fear could inspire.

Two hours elapsed before she returned. She then entered the room as abruptly as she had quitted it, and informed the almost fainting Jacintha, that her friend was come to take her from the convent.

Terror and weakness vanished before the joy these tidings imparted; and, with an exclamation expressive of her rapture, Jacintha immediately began to prepare for her departure, not without wondering at her escape from the examination, but still more, the punishment she had dreaded. In her self-congratulations, however, upon this

supposed escape; she soon found she was too premature.

"Though your friend is come, you cannot go to him," said the nun, fastening the door, and advancing towards her.

"Not go to him!" repeated Jacintha, looking wildly; and dropping her pelisse, which she had just snatched from a chair, "not go to him!"

"No; never must you hope to rejoin him.... never must you hope to pass these walls, except you promise inviolable secrecy relative to the discovery you made within them."

Jacintha shuddered on hearing a determination which, if persevered in, doomed the unfortunate lady Endermay to continued misery; she tried, however, to conceal the shock it gave her, and, with an assumed calmness, said....

"'Tis not your own ignorance, I am convinced, of the consequences which could not fail of resulting from the unlawful detention of a British subject, but your supposition of mine, that has induced you to hold out such a threat to me, which, I must now inform you, I well knew you could not put into execution."

"Could not!" repeated the nun, with a disdainful glance; "be not too certain. Who is to know of your unjust detention? How easily could a story be invented to impose upon your friends?"

Jacintha again shuddered. She saw she was completely entangled in a snare, from which she feared she could never extricate herself, but by submitting to the conditions prescribed. Nothing short of absolute necessity, however, she determined, should make her give up the cause of lady Endermay.

"Listen to me," resumed the nun, motioning for her to take a chair, and seating herself by her. "The compassion excited by your youth and inexperience, has led me to conceal from the abbess the indiscretion you have been guilty of; thoroughly convinced, that was she to know it, she would punish it in the most rigorous manner, in all probability, by the utter deprivation of liberty; but, though inclined to screen you from her resentment, I cannot think of exposing myself to it on your account, which must be the case, if I suffer you to quit the convent without pledging me the vow I require."

"Why must it be the case?" asked Jacintha.

"Because the disclosure you would then think yourself at liberty to reveal, would soon reach the ears of the abbess, and discover to her my having concealed your visit to the tower; which, it must be known, you could not have made without my knowledge, having passed the two nights you were in the convent within the church, at penance. Such a circumstance would inevitably draw upon me a vengeance that nothing, perhaps, but the most dreadful sufferings on my part could appease....sufferings which, be assured, I shall run no risk of encountering. If you, therefore, persist in withholding the promise I desire, I will no longer hesitate acquainting the abbess with your conduct. If I do, mark my words....you will repent having compelled me to the measure. As a further inducement to your acting in the manner I wish....heaven knows, for your own sake...I know that you have been imposed upon by a fabricated story. The person with whom you conversed in the tower, is not the person she wishes you to believe; if she was, these holy walls

would never have been her prison. It is her own artifices, and not the artifices of others, which have caused her to be confined within them; an early deviation from propriety compelled her friends to deprive her of a liberty which she made so improper an use of."

Jacintha utterly discredited this assertion, and endeavoured, by all the address she was mistress of, to avoid binding herself to secrecy relative to lady Endermay.

"I will no longer argue with you," said the nun, rising from her chair as she spoke; "abide the consequences which you seem to brave."

These consequences were too appalling to the imagination of Jacintha, not to make her earnestly solicitous to avoid encountering them. She hastily followed the nun, and caught her arm.

"What is your decision?" demanded the nun, pausing, and looking earnestly at her.

Jacintha made no reply, and by her manner betrayed the highest irresolution.

"Again I solemnly assure you," said the nun, "you never can pass these walls unless you take the vow I require. I wish to save you from suffering; but I cannot sacrifice my own safety to that wish."

"There is then no alternative," cried Jacintha, who had not a doubt that loss of liberty would follow the abbess's knowledge of her conduct; "there is then no alternative," she inwardly exclaimed, "between involving myself in irremediable evils, or consigning a fellow-creature to lingering misery. Oh God!" she continued, with uplifted eyes, "thou who seest my reluctance to give up the cause I undertook...thou who seest me compelled to a breach of humanity...do thou,

merciful and gracious Being, alleviate that wretchedness to which all human consolation...all human succour, is denied!"

Pale and trembling, she then took a sacred oath never to disclose any particular relative to lady Endermay; but scarcely had it passed her lips, ere her countenance assumed a deathlike hue, and she fell, almost fainting, upon the bosom of the nun, overpowered by the idea of the misery to which disappointed hope would condemn the unhappy woman. The nun supported her to a window; the cool air soon revived her, and a flood of tears in some degree lightened the oppression of her heart. As soon as her emotions had a little subsided, she prepared for her departure, assisted by the nun.

At the head of the stairs she was met by a lay-sister, who conducted her to the parlour, where Henri impatiently waited for her. His eyes sparkled, his cheeks glowed, at her approach; but his pleasure soon vanished before the dejection so visible in her looks; into the cause of which, it was evident, a fear of offending, alone prevented him from inquiring.

Jacintha was too much occupied by the idea of lady Endermay, to be able to enter into conversation with Henri, even after she had left the convent. After addressing a few broken and disjointed sentences to him, she sunk into a gloomy reverie, and began to question her heart whether a vow, taken under such circumstances as hers...a vow, which doomed innocence and virtue still to suffer beneath artifice and oppression, ought not to be broken. But when she reflected upon its solemnity....when she reflected that, if its violation restored one innocent person to hap-

piness, it would condemn another to misery (for so the nun had assured her), she shrunk from the idea, and, with a flood of tears, resigned the unfortunate lady Endermay to her fate.

Henri's looks declared his surprise at her emotion ; and Jacintha recollecting herself, and naturally concluding he might suppose she had some new cause for melancholy, and feel offended if she did not reveal it, endeavoured to rally her spirits.

The mules were stationed at the entrance of the forest, and they immediately recommenced their journey. Travelling through the less frequented ways, lest they should encounter those whom they wished to avoid, about sunset they reached a small village at the foot of the Pyrenees, where they stopped for the night.

By an early hour the next morning, Henri, according to the request of Jacintha, had a chaise at the inn-door for her, in which, accompanied by him, she commenced her journey to Calais. And now, as she began to retrace the road she had travelled with lord Gwytherin, the severe sufferings she had experienced in consequence of his treachery, and the cruelty of her mother, rushed upon her mind, expelling from it every other idea than that of the inhumanity of her parents...an idea so agonizing, so dreadful, that she tried to prevent herself from dwelling on it.

In Henri's conversation she sought to find a refuge from her oppressive thoughts. Mild, modest, and respectful, he every moment gained upon her esteem and admiration, and she could scarcely persuade herself that he was the son of the rude and illiterate peasants to whose care she had been consigned.

They travelled with the utmost caution and privacy, and after a journey of some days, reached Calais. A sudden joy pervaded the bosom of Jacintha, as she cast her eyes upon the waves which were to transport her back to that kingdom, where she expected to find that truth, that tenderness, which a vain expectation of meeting elsewhere, had induced her to quit.

It was now upwards of a year since Egbert had left England, and, by this time, she flattered herself he was returned. She pictured to herself the raptures which would attend their meeting; when, perhaps, after his suffering all the tortures of ignorance and suspense about her, she appeared unexpectedly before him.

“Oh!” she exclaimed to herself, as her heart glowed at these anticipations of her fancy, “that moment, that blessed moment, will compensate for all my sufferings!”

The feelings of Henri, on arriving at Calais, were very different from hers; and his dejection, which had gradually increased as they approached the termination of their journey, confirmed a suspicion, which the language of his eyes had for some time before infused into her bosom....a suspicion which made her anxious for a separation as soon as possible.

They reached Calais early in the day, and Jacintha had scarcely alighted from the chaise, ere she inquired about a packet; and, to her extreme satisfaction, heard one was to sail in the afternoon, in which she immediately engaged a passage.

Her ardent gratitude made her deeply regret not having the power of making any adequate return for the services of Henri; without which,

she had every reason to believe, at this moment, she should have been a solitary exile from all she loved on earth.

In the course of the day, after a melancholy silence of some minutes, he entreated to be favoured with her address; that, if ever he visited happy England (so he styled it) he might be able to inquire into her destiny.

After a little consideration, Jacintha gave him an address to Mr. Decourcy's agent; assuring him, at the same time, it would ever afford her sincere happiness to hear of his welfare.

When the moment for parting arrived, the emotions of Henri became too violent to be concealed; Jacintha, however, though secretly affected, did not seem to notice them.

"Farewel!" cried she, extending her hand, which he tremblingly clasped between his, as she rose to obey a summons to the pier; "with this farewel, receive my most fervent wishes for your happiness. May the hopes, the expectations with which you are commencing your career in life, never be disappointed! May you meet from others, generosity equal to that which you manifested in your conduct towards a forlorn and unhappy stranger!"

Henri, unable to speak, bowed his thanks. He attended Jacintha to the pier, nor left it till the packet was under weigh. He then, with swimming eyes and a heavy heart, retired from it, repeating to himself her last words.

"Unavailing wishes!" he exclaimed. "My hopes and expectations of happiness are already disappointed. Yet, though unavailing, sweet is the idea of them...yes, soothing to my soul is the idea of living in her remembrance. Ah! why

did I not strive to resist this passion at its commencement? Had I done so...had I attended to the suggestions of reason, which warned me of the misery it was likely to be productive of, I should not, perhaps, have experienced such pangs as I now feel. Vain, however, is the regret. It only adds sharpness to...shall I dare to say, the sting of disappointment? Oh, no; I never encouraged a presumptuous thought."

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CHAP. V.

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"Jacintha here in solitude they found,  
"Her downcast eyes fixt on the silent ground ;  
"Her dress neglected, and unbound her hair,  
"She seem'd the mournful image of Despair."

GARTH.

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SIX months had now elapsed since Jacintha quitted England ; but so tedious appears time passed in misery, that it seemed to her six years since she had left it.

There were but few passengers on board the packet, and these all strangers to Jacintha. As soon as it was under weigh, a sailor put into her hands a small sealed parcel, which, to her extreme regret, she found to be her pocket-book, undiminished in its contents, and which, previous to the commencement of her journey to Calais, she had insisted on Henri's accepting. She felt shocked and distressed beyond expression, at the idea of his little stock of wealth (which, she understood, he had received from his instructress, as the means of freeing himself from the tyranny of his parents) being, in all probability, expended on her account, and of the consequent difficulties in which he might be involved ; and, had she had the power of doing so, she would immediately

have sent back what she conceived he had so imprudently returned.

Early the next morning the packet reached Dover. Jacintha hailed with delight those white cliffs, to which, but a few months before, she had bidden so melancholy a farewell. Gloom and despondence vanished as she approached them; the sweet consciousness of security diffused a pleasing serenity over her mind, and cheerfulness again took up its abode in her bosom.

On reaching the inn, to which they all repaired, she parted from her fellow-passengers, and was, by her desire, shown into a private room. She lost not a moment in inquiring about a conveyance to the metropolis. Hearing there was a vacant seat in the mail-coach, which set off in the evening, she directly secured it, as the most eligible mode of travelling for her, in her present unprotected situation.

The intervening hours wore heavily away, and nothing but a dread of encountering some person she knew, prevented her from getting some one to shew her the antiquities of Dover.

The passengers in the coach consisted of two elderly men and a woman; who, after a little desultory conversation at the beginning of the journey, sunk to repose. Jacintha vainly wished to follow their example, as her mind became involuntarily agitated at the idea of what her feelings in a few short hours would be, when she should either have her expectations confirmed or disappointed. She felt, that suspense itself does not cause greater agitation, than the anticipation of that moment in which we imagine it will be terminated.

At an early hour the next morning, she and the other passengers were set down at \*\*\*\*\* inn; where, however, the latter stopped but a few minutes, and Jacintha could not refrain a sigh at the idea of being compelled to stay behind them, from having no friend, no home to receive her.

She saw however the more destitute she was, the more requisite her own exertions were. Checking, therefore, the unpleasant reflections her situation inspired, which she flattered herself a few hours would reverse, she desired to be shewn into a more private room than that into which she had been ushered on quitting the coach, and ordered breakfast. It was some time, however, before breakfast made its appearance, for as yet but few of the inhabitants of the inn were up; and the surrounding streets, which, in a few hours resounded with the rattling chariot and din of business, were now almost perfectly still and deserted.

The first object with Jacintha was, to procure a proper habitation for herself, which she did not consider a common inn to be; but where to look for such an one she was utterly at a loss. After a little consideration, it occurred to her, that the people of the house, perhaps, might be able to assist her search; accordingly, when the waiter entered with breakfast, she desired him to inform his mistress she wished to speak to her.

In consequence of this message, a little, fat, vulgar-looking woman soon after entered the room, and begged, with a curtesy, to know Jacintha's commands. Jacintha motioned for her to take a chair, and then (though not without embarrassment, conscious that she must appear in a suspicious light) informed her of the purpose for which she had sent for her.

The landlady made her no reply for several minutes, nor would she promise to comply with the request of Jacintha, till she had repeatedly questioned and requestioned her. At length she said, she knew a widow woman, who lived in Oxford-street, who had very nice snug lodgings, which, if unlet, she thought she might be able to procure for her ; but assured her, if she found her good nature or credulity were imposed upon, she should resent it highly.

Jacintha thanked her fervently for her obliging readiness to serve her, and expressed an earnest wish to have an immediate inquiry made about these lodgings.

The landlady accordingly left the room, and returned in about an hour with the pleasing information of their being ready for her reception.

Jacintha, rejoiced at this intelligence, delayed not a moment in proceeding to them, eager to commence those inquiries her heart dictated ; and previous to which, she considered, procuring a proper habitation for herself, an indispensable step.

She was set down at a neat private house, at the upper end of Oxford-street. The door was opened by an elderly woman, of no very prepossessing appearance, who, on Jacintha's entering the hall, gave her to understand she was the mistress of the mansion. She led the way up stairs to a small front drawing-room, commanding a pleasant view of Hyde-Park, calling, as she did so, to a servant girl, to go and receive the young lady's luggage from the coachman.

The girl followed in a few minutes with this luggage, which merely consisted of the few necessaries Jacintha had brought with her from the chateau, tied up in a handkerchief.

"The coachman, says there is nothing more of your's in the coach, mem," cried the girl, dangling the bundle upon her finger.

"Nothing more!" repeated her mistress, in a voice expressive of surprise and displeasure, and casting a scrutinizing glance at Jacintha, which called a blush into her face by the suspicion it betrayed; then, as if recollecting herself, she took the bundle from the girl, and desired her to go and discharge the coach.

Jacintha informed her she did not mean to have it discharged, as she was going out again in a few minutes. Mrs. Benson inquired when she might expect her back; to which inquiry Jacintha replied, she could not possibly tell; and Mrs. Benson having asked her a few other trifling questions, retired with the maid.

Jacintha immediately set about re-adjusting her dress, and then descended to the coach, in which she directly proceeded to the house of Egbert's friend and correspondent, in the city. Her emotions, on approaching it, at the idea of Egbert, perhaps, being at this very period in it, became so violent, that she could scarcely breathe.

Instead of alighting, on reaching it, she sent a porter who stood at the door, into the office, to request Mr. Arden would step to her for a few minutes.

Instead of the old gentleman she expected to see, a young one, in deep mourning, came to her; who almost petrified her by his intelligence of the death of the merchant, his uncle, and his declaring himself utterly ignorant of his private correspondents, amongst whom he included Egbert.

As soon as Jacintha was sufficiently recovered from the shock he had given her, she ordered the

coachman to drive further into the city, where Mr. Decourcy's agent resided; but here disappointment also awaited her. He was gone out of town with his family, and the woman entrusted with the care of his house, could give no information whatsoever concerning them.

Tortured by her incertitude about those she loved, Jacintha resolved on proceeding immediately to Mortlake, where she trusted it would be terminated; better able to bear the contempt of Mrs. Derwent, and the coldness of miss Woodville, than the pain it inflicted.

Thither she was accordingly driven; but the moment the coach stopped at Mrs. Derwent's house, she was convinced she should not here receive the satisfaction she required, as its closed windows evidently proved the family were from home. She alighted, however, and after knocking several times, the door was at length opened by an elderly woman, who soon confirmed her conjecture, by informing her that Mrs. Derwent and miss Woodville had left home upwards of a month.

"To what place are they gone?" asked Jacintha.

"Why, I understand they are gone upon a tour to some of the distant counties, miss," replied the woman.

"Pray, can you tell me whether Mr. Woodville was of their party?"

"Oh Lord! yes, miss; he came up from Wye-field on purpose to go with them."

"Good heaven! how unfortunate!" cried Jacintha. "Then I suppose you can give me no direction to them?"

"No, that I can't, indeed; but if you choose to leave any letter or message with me for them, I

will be sure to deliver either, faithfully, when they return; which, I dare say, they will do in about six weeks or two months."

"Two ages!" exclaimed Jacintha, in an agony of impatience and disappointment.

"Dear me, miss, I am sorry to see you so fretted," cried the woman. "Pray walk into the hall, and rest yourself a bit. I am sorry there is not a better place to shew you into."

Jacintha, almost exhausted by her feelings, accepted the good woman's invitation. After considering a little, it occurred to her that perhaps this woman might be able, in some degree, to relieve the anxiety she suffered about her friends. This idea no sooner occurred than her spirits felt revived, and raising her head from her hand, she inquired whether she belonged to Mrs. Derwent's family.

"Yes," the woman replied, she was wife to the gardener, and first housemaid.

"Then you can probably tell me," said Jacintha, "whether Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, who, you know, to be sure, are relations of your lady, have been here lately, or whether they are still abroad?"

"Oh, yes, miss, I know they are still abroad; for one of the servants called here the other day from the country."

"And did he say when they were expected back?"

"No, miss; but he said he supposed not for some months."

Jacintha paused for a moment. She then described the person of Egbert, and asked whether she had ever seen a gentleman answering that description in the house.

“Why, no, I can’t say *as* I ever did, miss,” replied the woman. “But, Lord! such a person might have come forty times, and I not have seen him; for I am not in the way of seeing my lady’s visitors.”

“Good heaven!” exclaimed Jacintha to herself, finding all her inquiries fruitless, “what shall I do? To endure, any longer, the torture inflicted by my ignorance of those I love, is impossible.”

She sat some minutes in deep meditation; the result of which was a determination to go to Mrs. Greville the ensuing day. She rewarded the woman for her civility; and, with a heavy heart, re-entered the coach, and returned to her lodgings, faint from fatigue of body and mind.

She had scarcely entered the drawing-room, ere she was followed by Mrs. Benson, who desired to know whether she had dined. Jacintha replied in the negative, but said she had no appetite.

Lord! you had better come down, and take a cup of tea with me, ma’am,” said Mrs. Benson; “you really look quite weak and pale.”

Jacintha accepted the invitation, glad of any expedient which had a chance of diverting the unhappiness of her thoughts. She soon found Mr. Benson’s motive for desiring her company, was curiosity, not good-nature. She found it difficult to avoid answering the direct questions she put to her; and on declining to do so, Mrs. Benson proceeded to mention the danger which attended any attempt at imposing upon creditable house-keepers. She mentioned the exemplary punishment she had inflicted upon two or three persons, who had attempted to practise imposition

upon her, and whom, as strangers, she had most unwillingly admitted into her house.

Jacintha heard her without emotion, conscious of possessing the power of removing the suspicions she saw she entertained concerning her, and at which she was not in the least surprised.

Her conversation reminded her of the scantiness of her wardrobe; and being unwilling to go to any place where she was not known, by herself, she asked Mrs. Benson to accompany her the next morning, as early as convenient, to make the purchases she required.

Mrs. Benson's countenance brightened at this invitation, and she readily promised to attend her.

At her request Jacintha breakfasted with her the ensuing morning, and immediately after breakfast, proceeded with her, on foot, to a house a little lower in the street, which she had particularly recommended, where she bespoke a variety of things, which the people promised to send home to her the next evening. Hence she proceeded in a coach to the lodgings which she knew Mrs. Greville had occupied in Essex-street, at the time she left the kingdom; where, she flattered herself, she should not again be disappointed. That this, however, would be the case, she had no great fear, as she knew the term for which Mrs. Greville had taken them, was not yet expired. Nothing but a hope of having her painful anxiety about her friends relieved by this visit, could have induced her to make it; so unwilling was she to encounter the rudeness and ill-nature of Mrs. Greville and miss Gertrude.

The hall-door was opened by a little girl, who instantly destroyed the hope which had brought Jacintha to the house, by informing her Mrs. Greville had left it.

Jacintha paused for a moment in an agony of disappointment, and then desired to know whether she was gone to the country. Ere the girl could reply to this question, a woman, who had stood listening, at a parlour-door, to Jacintha's inquiries, came out, and informed her Mrs. Greville was gone to live with her daughter, in Finsbury-square.

"In Finsbury-square!" repeated Jacintha; and was about asking a more particular direction, when the woman prevented her by saying....

"Yes, miss, it is there Mr. Polworth, who married her daughter, lives."

"How long has she been married?" asked Jacintha.

"Why, upwards of two months, miss," said the woman, drawing closer to the coach, and laying her hand upon the door; "and very greatly, I assure you. Mr. Polworth is a merchant of the first consequence; and though, to be sure, a little oldish for so young a lady, his wealth may well make amends for every thing. 'Twas a lucky hour for her, when first her mother thought of bringing her to town."

"I hope it may prove so," cried Jacintha, fervently, yet involuntarily, in a voice that proved her doubts of its being so.

"I am sure you would think so, miss, if you saw the stile in which she lives. Why, she has a house and a coach fit for a princess; and as to dress, I don't suppose there's a woman of her rank in the kingdom exceeds her in that respect..... Many people blamed her for marrying a man so much older than herself; but, for my part, I think she shewed her wisdom in doing so."

"I hope she did," again involuntarily said Jacintha. Then begging her address, she put a

stop to any further conversation, by ordering the coachman to drive on.

He stopped, agreeably to her direction, before a very handsome house. Whilst he was knocking at it, Jacintha looked from the window, and caught, at the moment, a glimpse of Mrs. Greville peeping over a venetian blind in the parlour. That Mrs. Greville saw and recognized her, Jacintha was convinced, from her immediately retreating, and she greatly feared her being denied to her.

She found herself, however, agreeably mistaken. The servant who opened the door, immediately said Mrs. Greville, for whom Jacintha alone inquired, was at home; and Jacintha accordingly alighting, was ushered through a very handsome hall, up a flight of stairs richly carpeted, into a superb drawing-room, where all bespoke the wealth of the master, and taste of the mistress.

Here she sat a full hour, before any one made their appearance, during which her thoughts frequently reverted from herself, to the too probable consequences likely to result from an union between beings so totally dissimilar in ages, dispositions, and pursuits, as she had reason to suppose Gertrude and her husband to be.....an union to which, she concluded, from what she had heard, that vanity on one side, and a foolish and inconsiderate passion on the other, had been the sole inducement.

At length the drawing-room door was thrown open, and Mrs. Greville entered, completely out of mourning, and dressed in a style not more ridiculous than improper, considering the early hour of the day. At the first glance, Jacintha saw she had altered her dress; and she now perceived to

what cause it was owing, she had not before made her appearance.

Notwithstanding the ill treatment Jacintha had ever received from her, her affectionate heart involuntarily glowed with pleasure at the sight of a person whom she had so long known.....so long looked up to as her nearest relative ; and who, by an association of ideas, revived the recollection of many tender and interesting scenes, at once pleasant and mournful to her soul.

She started from her chair the moment Mrs. Greville entered, and, with out-stretched hands, and a smile of ineffable sweetness, was approaching her, when the coldness of Mrs. Greville's look, and her formal curtsy, made her as hastily retreat as she had advanced, vexed with herself for having yielded to her feelings.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, miss Jacintha," said Mrs. Greville, seating herself, as she spoke, upon a sofa, and motioning to Jacintha to resume her chair ; " pray, when did you come to town ?"

Jacintha informed her.

" And how did you hear of my address ?"

Jacintha satisfied her also on this head.

" And so you did not hear until this morning of miss Greville's marriage ?"

" No, madam, I did not," replied Jacintha.

" You were vastly surprised, I suppose, at it ?"

" Not in the least," replied Jacintha. " We can only be surprised at what is extraordinary and there certainly was nothing extraordinary in such a marriage."

" Why no, to be sure," said Mrs. Greville, with rather a mortified look ; " only that I thought, perhaps, as you knew Gertrude had not a great fortune, you might have wondered at her being so

advantageously settled. Many people did so, I assure you."

"I think they should rather have wondered if she had not been advantageously settled," said Jacintha, with a good-natured smile.

"Certainly, Gertrude has attractions," cried Mrs. Greville; "but then fortune is so generally the first consideration in these days, that people are unavoidably surprised when they hear of disinterested matches. Perhaps you don't know," she added, fearing that Jacintha, from not expressing any astonishment at the sudden elevation of Gertrude, was not fully impressed with an idea of it, "that Mr. Polworth is one of the first merchants in the city, and possessed of a princely independence."

She then proceeded to gratify her vanity, by giving an account of the settlement, the courtship, the marriage, and even the entertainments, which were given in consequence of it.

From her narrative, notwithstanding the care she took not to say any thing which could lessen her daughter, Jacintha was able to collect sufficiently to prove that she was not mistaken in the motives she had ascribed Gertrude's marriage to; and also to make her conjecture it had been greatly opposed by the friends of Mr. Polworth, on account of his age, and a daughter he had by a first marriage.

As soon as Mrs. Greville had gratified her vanity, by fully expatiating upon the wealth and consequence of her daughter, she endeavoured to gratify her curiosity, by inquiring into every thing which had befallen Jacintha since they separated: but particularly, how she became acquainted with the lady in Lancashire....

"To whose house," continued she, "I learned from Mrs. Derwent, one day Mrs. Polworth drove me to Mortlake in her phaeton, you were gone."

Jacintha, who expected this inquiry, betrayed no embarrassment at it, and merely replied to it, by saying, time would not permit her to enter into the particulars Mrs. Greville desired to know.

She then changed the discourse, by asking after the health and welfare of all her family, and their old friends at Wyefield, and concluded by requesting to know (in a manner which she hoped would give Mrs. Greville no suspicion of having waited upon her solely for the purpose of making the inquiry) whether she had heard any thing lately of Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy?

"Not I, indeed," said Mrs. Greville. "The last time I heard any thing about them, was when I called upon Mr. Decourcy's agent for my annuity, which is at least three months ago. They never desired to keep up any correspondence with me; and indeed I am now glad they did not, for I should have found it vastly inconvenient, I am so constantly engaged amongst the numerous friends and connections of Mr. and Mrs. Polworth. *A-propos*, I hope they do not mean to break their promises to you. Mrs. Polworth and I have often talked over the dreadful situation you would be in, if they should do so. In that case, we have thought the best thing you could do, would be to try and procure the situation of governess; which, in a respectable family, is not uncomfortable, I assure you. You can't conceive what a pleasant life miss Polworth's governess leads. Should you require any thing of the kind, I think I may venture to promise you the recommendation of Mrs. Polworth."

"You and Mrs. Folworth, madam," replied Jacintha, with a calmness which defeated the malicious purpose of this speech, by proving her

neither ruffled nor mortified by it, "are extremely kind in being interested about me. I have no doubt of your being still as much inclined, as you ever were, to serve me."

"There's often a double meaning in your speeches, miss Jacintha," cried Mrs. Greville, with a heightened colour, and after a short pause, "which I detest...I like plain speaking."

"So do I, my dear madam," said Jacintha, "and plain dealing too. But will you permit me to ask, whether you intend to return to Wyefield soon?"

"Soon! Why I don't mean to return there at all....I hate the very name of it. There is no society there fit for any one who has seen any thing of life. 'Tis the most stupid....."

Here a sudden noise outside the door, something like smothered laughter, interrupted her; and the next instant the door was flung open, and a great, tall, hoidening looking girl entered, or rather bounced into the room; and after rudely staring a minute at Jacintha, without taking any other notice of her, told Mrs. Greville that breakfast was ready; and the old boy (meaning her father) was gone to the 'change; and captain Bellamy was just come, in the charmingest spirits in the world.

Mrs. Greville immediately rose, as did Jacintha. The inquiry most interesting to her heart she had delayed till this moment. She now approached Mrs. Greville, and, in a low voice, begged to know whether she had received any intelligence of her friend, Mr. Oswald.

"My friend!" repeated Mrs. Greville, in an indignant tone. "I request, miss Jacintha, you may never style him so again. I assure you, I shall never forget or forgive the disdainful manner in

which he treated me when about quitting Wyefield. I remember the time when you would not have honoured me so far as to call him my friend. But times are altered," added she, glancing round the drawing-room.

The insinuation which these words were meant to convey, raised a blush of indignation in the cheeks of Jacintha.

"I shall no longer intrude upon your time, madam," said she. "Be so good as to present my compliments and congratulations to Mrs. Polworth."

"Stop, miss Jacintha," cried Mrs. Greville, as Jacintha turned towards the door. "I don't want you to suppose I have any enmity to you; on the contrary, I am inclined to pay you attention, and so is Mrs. Polworth, I dare say; only she is particularly engaged, I should introduce you to her now. If, however, you will leave me your address, we will endeavour to find an opportunity of calling on you."

Not to do this, however, Jacintha had determined previous to seeing her, as she well knew, by giving her her address, she should give her an opportunity of learning whence she came, and many other particulars necessary to conceal. She, therefore, in reply to this speech, said, it was not in her power at present to receive any visitors; and again curtsying, she hurried from the room, not sufficiently quick, however, to prevent her hearing miss Polworth ask Mrs. Greville whether she was not the young girl whom she had brought up so long out of charity.

As she was passing through the hall, a servant, suddenly coming from a parlour, gave her an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Polworth in a very elegant

morning-dress, at breakfast, with captain Bellamy by her side, whose looks evidently proved the subject on which he was conversing with her. Though both of them glanced towards Jacintha, neither appeared to perceive her.

With a heavy heart Jacintha re-entered the coach, and at a little distance from the house, gave the man a direction to her lodgings. She saw there would be no use in renewing her inquiries, for some time, about Egbert and the Decourcys, and tried to bear with patience the idea of being kept still longer in ignorance concerning them.

As the coach was driving through Cheapside, it got so entangled amidst other carriages, that one of the hind wheels was dragged off. Jacintha received no other injury from the accident, than that which fright occasioned; and by the exertions of the people, who collected round it, but more particularly by the exertions of a gentleman, whose carriage had principally caused the accident, and who immediately alighted to offer his services, Jacintha was soon extricated from it, and conducted to a jeweller's shop, on the opposite side of the street. Here drops and water were administered to her, and she soon recovered from her fright.

The gentleman, who had been so assiduous in rendering her his assistance, and whose manners, as well as appearance, though past the prime of life, were highly prepossessing, still continued to pay her the utmost attention, and at length entreated to have the pleasure of setting her down in whatever part of the town she was going to. This entreaty Jacintha politely, but positively declined complying with; and notwithstanding all his solicitations, was quitting the shop, in order to pursue her way homewards on foot, when the

coachman entered to demand his fare, which Jacintha, in the agitation she was thrown into, had utterly forgotten.

She directly proceeded to satisfy his demand ; but, on putting her hand into her pocket, she found both her purse and pocket-book were gone. Her consternation at their loss was so great, that she stood mute and motionless, till restored to something like recollection by the stranger's (who still pressed his suit, and seemed bent on trying to prevail on her to take a seat in his carriage) inquiring whether she was ill.

"No, sir," she replied, with a deep sigh, and scarcely knowing what she said. Then reflecting that complaints would be unavailing; and that, by betraying her distress, she might perhaps expose herself to unpleasant treatment, she calmly took from her pocket a few loose shillings, which she found in it, and paid the coachman his demand.

She then left the shop with a determination of returning immediately to Mrs. Polworth's house, for the purpose of acquainting Mrs. Greville with what had happened, and endeavouring to obtain a supply from her for her present emergencies. This she was almost confident she would not, on Mrs. Dscourcy's account, like to refuse her ; as Jacintha well knew, though she pretended to make light of their notice, she would be extremely concerned to displease them ; which, permitting her to remain in any distress she could free her from, could not fail of doing.

Though Jacintha had still a few shillings remaining, after paying the coachman, she meant to proceed on foot to Finsbury-square, as the late accident rendered her fearful of going again through any of the crowded streets in a carriage. This intention,

however, she was obliged to give up, in consequence of being followed by the gentleman who had been so importunate with her to accept a seat in his; and who now became so troublesome in his assiduities, that, in order to free herself from them, she suddenly beckoned to a coach, which immediately drawing up to the pavement, she stepped into it, ere he was well aware of her intention.

On stopping at Mrs. Polworth's, she alighted and knocked at the door herself. The servant who opened it was the same she had before seen. In reply to her inquiry, he informed her, Mrs. Greville was out.

Distressed and agitated by this intelligence, Jacintha was considering what she should do, when her eyes accidentally glanced upon one of the parlour-windows, and she perceived Mrs. Greville again peeping over the venetian blind, who instantly, however, shrunk from her observation.

"I have very particular business, sir," said she, immediately turning to the servant, "with Mrs. Greville; and if I cannot see her, you would oblige me very much by shewing me into a room where I could write a few lines to her."

The man hesitated a few minutes. He then admitted Jacintha into the hall, and conducted her into a small back parlour, fitted up something like an office. Here he waited till Jacintha had written and delivered to him a short note for Mrs. Greville, explanatory of the distressing situation she was in at present, and the consequent necessity she was under of borrowing a few pounds from her, till she could receive a remittance from Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy.

Near an hour elapsed ere he returned. When he did, he presented a sealed paper to Jacintha,

which she eagerly tore open ; but how great was her mortification, on finding it was her own note he had given her !

“ What is the meaning of this, sir ? ” asked she, looking at the servant.

“ Nothing, madam,” answered he, “ only that what I told you is true. Mrs. Greville is out, and so is my lady, and all the family.”

“ Where are they gone ? ” demanded Jacintha ; who, from the positive manner in which he spoke, now almost began to doubt the evidence of her own eyes.

“ I really don’t know. Somewhere to the country, I believe.”

“ How soon do you expect them back ? ”

“ I really can’t tell when they will be back,” answered he, somewhat impatiently.

“ They can only be gone upon an excursion,” said Jacintha. “ If I leave this note, and call for an answer in the evening, don’t you think it is probable I might get one ? ”

“ No ; I think no such thing,” replied he, in rather a surly accent. “ I am certain there’s no use in your either calling or sending here again.”

From these words Jacintha could no longer doubt Mrs. Greville’s being at home, her having read the note, and persisting in being denied, in order to avoid complying with the request it contained ; neither could she doubt, both she and Mrs. Polworth triumphed at the idea of the distress her refusing to grant it, would occasion.

Her heart swelled with indignation at their meanness and inhumanity, and tearing the note, she hurried to the hall, forgetting, in her resentment, the horrors of her situation. Ere she reached the hall-door, however, all these horrors rushed

upon her imagination. She shuddered at the idea of being friendless, penniless, in such a place as London; and pale and trembling, she stopped before the door of the parlour in which she had seen Mrs. Greville, and still supposed her to be irresolute, whether or not she should open it, and by explicitly declaring her sentiments, endeavour to obtain the assistance she required. The servant, however, effectually prevented such a measure, by getting between her and the door, and telling her there was no use in her waiting any longer.

Jacintha, without replying, instantly moved onwards, and left the house, almost with a solemn determination never more to have any intercourse with Mrs. Greville or her daughter.

"Oh, my father, my friend!" she inwardly exclaimed, involuntarily thinking, at this moment, of the departed Greville. How differently wouldst thou have acted! But hadst thou lived, I should not have been situated as I now am. I should not then have needed succour or assistance; for I should not then have been disclaimed, disacknowledged; a solitary wanderer, against whom every door seems barred....every heart seems hardened!"

Her eyes were ready to overflow from the anguish of her thoughts. She tried, however, to struggle against her feelings, in order to prevent those, who, she knew, rejoiced at her distress, and she doubted not, at this very moment, were watching her, being gratified by beholding it.

Though she was ill able to walk in the present agitated state of her mind, she was obliged to discharge the coach, in consequence of having no more change remaining than what exactly settled the coachman's demand for bringing her to Finsbury-square. Exclusive of this circumstance,

however, she would not have re-entered it, as she wished for time to deliberate on the conduct she should pursue, ere she returned home.

Vain, however, were her deliberations upon this subject. She could arrange no plan, she could devise no scheme, for extricating herself from her present difficulties, or even lessening them. The more she reflected upon them, the more frightful and multiplied they became, and her thoughts consequently grew wilder and more disturbed.

She knew, both by the manner and conversation of the woman with whom she lodged, that she entertained suspicions of her by no means favourable. This she did not wonder at, aware that appearances were rather against her ; and much she feared, that when those suspicions were confirmed, which she could scarcely doubt their being, on acquainting her with her present situation, the most unpleasant consequences would ensue. She could not doubt, indeed, Mrs. Benson's discrediting all her assertions ; and from the severe steps which she boasted of having taken against some former lodgers, whom she suspected of an intention of deceiving her, Jacintha could scarcely hope to escape her vengeance. In consequence of this apprehension, she became every moment more unwilling and afraid to face her ; and on reaching Charing-cross, which she did not do without difficulty and delay, being obliged to stop frequently to inquire her way thither, she proceeded to St. James's Park, instead of turning towards Oxford-street, and took possession of the first vacant seat she saw. Here she again asked herself what she was to do, or rather tried to summon sufficient courage to do what was unavoidable....namely, to return to her lodgings ; whence, with agony,

almost bordering on distraction, she reflected, that even if she escaped the ills she dreaded from Mrs. Benson's resentment, she would in all probability be turned.

Absorbed in misery, she heeded not the attention she attracted. Scarcely a person approached the seat she occupied, without stopping to gaze upon her, struck by her beauty, the disorder of her dress, but still more the disorder of her looks; and many continued to hover about her, only prevented from accosting her, by the deep distress which marked her countenance, heightened almost to an expression of wildness, by the quantity of hair which had fallen from beneath her bonnet, and hung carelessly about it.

At length the deep-toned clock of Westminster Abby striking four, roused her from her reverie. Her heart sunk as the sound vibrated on her ear; for it seemed a signal to her, to return to her dreaded home; and she accordingly rose for the purpose of doing so, certain, the longer she continued out, the stronger appearances would be against her.

At this instant, just as she was quitting her seat, she heard a female voice, at a little distance, calling to her. She started, and turning eagerly round, perceived a lady and two gentlemen hastening towards her. At the first glance, she did not recollect the lady; but upon her drawing nearer, Jacintha immediately recognized in her an early companion and friend, who, in consequence of the severity of her friends, had, three years before, eloped from Wyefield to London; a step, which, from the advantages it was reported to have been attended with to her, might, perhaps, as has been hinted in the beginning of this book, have set a dangerous example to Jacintha, whose

situation then so nearly resembled that she fled from, but for the superior strength and delicacy of her mind.

The striking alteration in the dress of her friend, which was fashionable in the extreme, and whom Jacintha had never before seen in any thing better than a russet gown and round cap, was the cause of her not directly recollecting her. But when she did ; when she found herself affectionately saluted by a person, who, she had reason to believe, regarded her, and who, she doubted not, would do all in her power to guard her from the dangers now impending over her ; the sudden transition, from despair to hope, from anguish to joy, was almost too much for her weakened spirits ; and, had not tears come to her relief, she would, in all probability, have sunk beneath her feelings. Trembling and sobbing, she threw herself upon the seat whence she had just risen, unable, for many minutes, to do more than fervently press the hand of her friend, Mrs. Saville, to her bosom.

Mrs. Saville returned her pressure with the utmost tenderness, and inquired the cause of her emotions. As soon as Jacintha could speak, she rose, and still holding the hand of her friend, drew her to a little distance from the seat, and briefly informed her of the distressing situation she was then in.

“ Good heaven ! I don’t wonder, indeed,” cried Mrs. Saville, after attentively listening to her, “ at your being almost mad. You can’t conceive how I rejoice at having met you, at so critical a juncture. The pleasure of this unexpected meeting is doubly heightened, by its having taken place at such a time. Be composed, my dear girl. I thank heaven, my ability to serve you is not inferior to my inclination. My house, my purse,

are both at your command, and shall continue to be so while you need them."

Another shower of tears fell from the eyes of Jacintha at these words; and, more forcibly, perhaps, than any language could have done, expressed the grateful feelings to which the fulness of her heart would not permit her to give utterance.

"Come, come," cried Mrs. Saville, tapping her cheek, "I will have nothing but sunshine now. We will directly steer our course homewards, where we can talk more freely over our adventures and misadventures, than we can possibly do here; and where you shall give me the address of the woman with whom you lodged, and the tradespeople from whom you bespoke your things, that I may immediately settle with them."

So saying, she beckoned to the two gentlemen, her companions, who had hitherto stood aloof. They directly hastened to her, and Jacintha was presented to them as her most particular friend.

Jacintha unwillingly raised her tearful eyes from the ground to encounter theirs; and instantly recognized, in one of them, the gentleman who had been so assiduous, or rather, so troublesome, in the morning; and whom Mrs. Saville introduced to her as a Mr. Loveit, a relation and intimate friend of her deceased husband, Mr. Saville.

"From the occurrences of this day, I shall certainly be tempted to worship chance," cried Mr. Loveit.

"Why, what has chance done to merit your adoration?" asked Mrs. Saville.

"Given me an opportunity of seeing and knowing one of the most lovely objects in the creation."

Mrs. Saville desired an explanation of these words, which he accordingly gave, accompanied by looks too expressive of admiration not to embarrass Jacintha. Her confusion was too great not to be perceived, and Mr. Loveit, not less well-bred than gallant, checked himself, in order to avoid increasing it.

Mrs. Saville lived in Sloane-street. On entering her house, which was spacious, and handsomely furnished, she quitted the gentlemen, and conducted Jacintha to her dressing-room, where she received a more particular account of her present situation, and the incidents that had led to it. She was minute, indeed, in her inquiries; but as Jacintha imputed them to friendship and solicitude about her, she answered them as unreservedly and explicitly as prudence would permit.

Mrs. Saville, in her turn, related what had befallen her since her departure from Wyefield, of which Jacintha had before heard but an imperfect, and consequently unsatisfactory, account.

On her arrival in London, she said, she fortunately obtained an introduction to an old lady, who engaged her as a companion. In her house she met an elderly gentleman of fortune, who soon became her captive, and made her proposals, which she did not think it prudent to reject. A year after their marriage he died, leaving her a very handsome independence.

She professed herself extremely happy, and ready to render every service, in her power, to her relations in Wyefield; though, from their former conduct to her, they little merited any attention from her. She also avowed her determination of not again parting with her liberty, without due

consideration, as she had not enjoyed any great portion of felicity in the married state.

As soon as the curiosity of each was satisfied, Mrs. Saville proposed to Jacintha her accompanying her to Covent-Garden theatre in the evening, which, with the other winter theatre, had been opened a few days, and in which, she said, she had places engaged.

Jacintha had no other objection to this proposal (as she thought, like her friend, an amusement of the nature proposed, would agreeably unbend her mind, and detach it from painful retrospections) than her dress. This was an objection, however, immediately obviated, by Mrs. Saville's offering to accommodate her from her wardrobe.

Accordingly a waiting-maid was summoned, and, with her assistance and Mrs. Saville's, Jacintha was elegantly dressed in a few minutes; and, with her friend, descended to the dining-parlour, where the two gentlemen impatiently expected them. Dinner was served in a few minutes after their return to it, and a lively and pleasant conversation took place. That Mr. Loveit was a man of high fashion and great information, both his manner and discourse denoted; and captain Merton, the name of the other gentleman, a young and very handsome man, was scarcely less elegant or entertaining.

In the society of people she liked, and a friend she regarded, Jacintha once more began to feel herself happy. But, though she admired Mr. Loveit, she would have been much better pleased had his attentions been less particular, and his looks less impassioned. In the course of the evening, however, his declaring his almost continual gaze was owing to the striking likeness she

bore a lady whom he had formerly known, in some degree overcame the embarrassment it excited.

Mrs. Saville eagerly inquired who the lady was.

"She was," replied Mr. Loveit, "one of the loveliest of.....but need I expatiate upon her charms, when I tell you miss Greville is her counterpart? Never in my life did I behold so strong, so perfect a resemblance....it extends even to the voice."

"What was her name?" asked Mrs. Saville.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Loveit, "I have very particular reasons for not mentioning it; nor is it of any consequence to know it, as she has long been numbered with the dead."

"She made a deep impression upon your memory, I fancy," said Mrs. Saville.

"A deep one indeed, cried Mr. Loveit, with a sigh; and suddenly rising, he walked about the room for several minutes in manifest agitation; then resuming his seat, he began to converse on another subject.

Coffee was soon after served, and Mrs. Saville ordered her coach, in which the party proceeded to Covent Garden.

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 CHAP. VI.
 

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“ Hold off, and let me run into his arms !”

LEE'S ALEXANDER.

“ Pleasure never comes sincere to man,

“ But lent by Heav'n upon hard usury ;

“ And while Jove holds us out the bowl of joy,

“ Ere it can reach our lips, 'tis dash'd with gall

“ By some left-handed god.”

DRYDEN'S OEDIPUS.

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BY the time they reached the theatre, the first act of the play was nearly over. The interval between that and the second, was employed by Jacintha in looking about the house, which she had never before been in ; but the moment the curtain again drew up, her whole attention was directed to the stage. Mr. Loveit procured a seat by her, and his conversation between the acts heightened the entertainment of the evening. She saw that captain Merton was very assiduous to her friend ; but as he had also, like Mr. Loveit, been introduced to her as a relation and intimate friend of the late Mr. Saville, she knew not whether to impute his assiduities to friendship or to love.

Towards the conclusion of the play, a little bustle in the next box made her instinctively di-

rect her eyes towards it, and she beheld two gentlemen quitting it, in one of whom, with emotions, which may better be conceived than described, she recognized Egbert.

She instantly started from her seat in order to fly after him. This action, together with the wildness of look which accompanied it, alarmed Mrs. Saville, who, catching her hand, eagerly inquired what was the matter?

"I have seen him....I have seen him?" whispered Jacintha, in almost breathless agitation. "I have seen Mr. Oswald! He quitted the next box this instant. Oh do not detain me, for heaven's sake! or he will be gone....we shall miss each other!"

Mrs. Saville was proceeding to make some further inquiry, which Jacintha interrupted, by forcing her hand from her, and making her way, regardless, or rather unconscious of any obstacles, to the box-door. She looked, in vain, however, on gaining the lobby, for Egbert; and, in the agony of disappointment, she wrung her hands together, and burst into tears.

"For heaven's sake! my dear girl," said Mrs. Saville, who, with the gentlemen, had hastily followed her, "try to compose yourself."

"Oh! why did you detain me?" cried Jacintha. "He is gone, and perhaps I may not be able to find him."

"I dare say he has not left the house," said Mrs. Saville. "Describe him as well as you can, and these gentlemen will go in search of him, I am sure."

Jacintha, joyfully catching at the hope these words inspired, did as her friend desired, and the gentlemen departed different ways. Mrs. Saville

then drawing Jacintha to a seat, entreated her to endeavour to calm her emotions, which, she made her observe had already drawn the eyes of several people upon her. This observation increased Jacintha's impatience for the return of the gentlemen.

Nearly half an hour elapsed ere they came back. The moment Jacintha perceived Mr. Loveit, who first returned, she started involuntarily from her seat, and hastened to meet him. His words confirmed what his looks had previously announced, namely, that he had been unsuccessful in his search; and captain Merton, almost at the same instant, declared he had been equally unfortunate.

Jacintha now relapsed into tears and agonies; nor could all the eloquence of her friend, or the united efforts of the gentlemen, in any degree tranquillize her, till they suggested to her the probability there was, of her being able to obtain some satisfactory intelligence about Egbert the next day, by having an inquiry made after him in the most frequented coffee-houses and hotels, which inquiry both Mr. Loveit and captain Merton readily undertook making.

Again cheered by revived hope, Jacintha soon recovered sufficiently to be able to enter the carriage. She excused herself, however, from sitting up to supper; for the various occurrences of this eventful day had completely fatigued her spirits. Mrs. Saville admitted her excuse, and attended her to her chamber, where she repeated to her every assurance that had a tendency to calm her mind.

In congratulating herself upon the safe return of Egbert, and the prospect there was of their soon meeting, Jacintha tried to overcome or lessen the regret occasioned by her disappointment relative to

him in the play-house. It recurred to her, that it would be an advisable measure to leave her address for him at the house of his late friend, the merchant in the city, where she had no doubt of his calling. This idea she communicated to Mrs. Saville, the next morning, who approved of it; but said, instead of waiting upon Mr. Arden, she thought it would be better to write to him.

Accordingly, after breakfast, Jacintha wrote a few lines, which she sent by a servant of Mrs. Saville, requesting Mr. Arden to have the goodness to inform Mr. Oswald, or desire him to be informed, should he chance to call at his house, that a very particular friend wished to see him at such a place (giving Mrs. Saville's direction).

Neither Mr. Loveit nor captain Merton made their appearance till towards dinner-time; neither brought any satisfactory intelligence for Jacintha; and, in proportion as her spirits had been elevated by hope, they now sunk from disappointment. Mrs. Saville perceiving her, after dinner, so weak and languid that she could scarcely sit up, or speak, proposed, in hopes the air and exercise might be of service to her, taking her to pass the night at a villa she had, about six miles from town, upon the banks of the Thames.

Jacintha immediately acceded to this proposal, as she saw her friend wished her to do so; and, besides, thought that change of scene might be of service to her. Accordingly the coach was ordered, and the gentlemen followed the ladies into it, though both had previously mentioned their being engaged; engagements, however, which they declared they gave up with the utmost pleasure, to have the superior pleasure of attending the ladies in their excursion.

Mrs. Saville's house was built in the cottage style, elegantly fitted up, and delightfully situated. The grounds were extensive; and though it was now about the middle of October, they still retained a great deal of autumnal beauty.

Jacintha felt herself benefited by the air and the ride, but more by the assurances both gentlemen gave her, of being still more diligent and general in their inquiries the ensuing day, than they had been on this.

The ensuing one, however, passed away like the preceding, without bringing either Egbert, or any information of Egbert to her.

The night they came to the villa, Mrs. Saville proposed their remaining a few days at it, as the weather was still delightfully fine, to which proposal Jacintha made no objection; but when she found there was no tidings of Egbert, she sincerely regretted having done so, as she felt she should have been much happier, or rather less restless and disturbed in town, where, in wandering about the streets, she would have had a chance of meeting him, than where she was at present.

She hinted this to Mrs. Saville, who either did not, or pretended not to understand the hint. Jacintha then spoke more explicitly, upon which Mrs. Saville replied, it was totally out of her power to return to town immediately; as, upon leaving it, she had given orders to have some alterations made in the principal rooms of her house, which could not be finished in less than a few days.

"I thought," said Jacintha, much surprised, "you left town with an intention of staying but one night in the country."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Saville, colouring highly; and after pausing some minutes, as if to consider

for an answer, "I left it with an intention of staying several nights in the country, and I thought I told you so in the coach. But, lord! my dear," continued she, in rather a peevish accent, and without giving Jacintha an opportunity of speaking, "you really make a monstrous fuss about this young man....much more than he is deserving of, I dare say."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Jacintha, "after what I told you concerning him, can you wonder at my strong anxiety about him?"

"Indeed I can, except you are assured he is equally anxious about you."

"Then I am assured he is," cried Jacintha.

"Don't be too certain," said Mrs. Saville; "men are naturally fickle; as the old song says...." "To one thing constant never."

"I must have convincing proofs of the inconstancy of the man I love, ere I can give credit to it," said Jacintha.

"Well, supposing he is constant," cried Mrs. Saville, "would you really be so imprudent, so foolish, as to marry him, except he had recovered something like an independence?"

"I would indeed," said Jacintha; "because I should hope by doing so, to lighten his cares, and to lessen his difficulties."

"I am sorry to find your notions so romantic," said Mrs. Saville. "Take my word for it, love would never compensate you for the pleasures and comforts you must forego, by marrying a man without a fortune. Come, be well advised; dismiss the foolish ideas you at present harbour, and make a proper use of your attractions."

"I don't understand you," cried Jacintha.

“Accept the advantages they would procure you,” answered Mrs. Saville. “At this moment there is a man of elegance, of affluence, of consequence, ready to lay himself, and all he possesses, at your feet. I am sure you know who I mean.”

“I should be concerned to think you were serious,” said Jacintha, “concerned to think I had inspired a passion which I could not return.”

“And why not?” demanded Mrs. Saville.

“Why not!” repeated Jacintha; “surely it is scarcely necessary to answer such a question; but since you have asked it, I must inform you that, was my attachment to Mr. Oswald less fervent than it is, I should still be bound to him from honour, since, from the mutual vows that passed between us, I consider myself almost as much his wife, as if the ceremony that would make me so, had already taken place.”

“Vows!” said Mrs. Saville, with a deriding laugh, “you really are now quite the country girl. After plighted vows, you will next begin to speak, I suppose, of love-tokens. Ah, my dear Jacintha! I see you have not forgotten your village education.”

“I wish,” cried Jacintha, in a voice half gay, half serious, “I could say the same of you.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Saville, “let us now adjourn to the gentlemen.”...This conversation had taken place in her dressing-room, after dinner....“I dare say, by this time, they have finished their wine, and tea is ready.”

They accordingly descended to the parlour, where they found they had been expected some time.

The hint which Mrs. Saville had dropped, or rather given, of Mr. Loveit's attachment, determined Jacintha to be more cool and distant in her

conduct to him than she had hitherto been. This coolness and distance, however, did not answer the purpose for which they were intended, namely, of checking his attentions, by shewing her dislike to them ; on the contrary, the more reserved she grew, the more assiduous and impassioned he became ; and Jacintha thought with the utmost uneasiness, of continuing much longer in a situation which would subject her to his company. But exclusive of any consideration about him, or anxiety about Egbert, she began to feel uneasy at the idea of being, for any longer period, the guest of Mrs. Saville ; in whose manner there was a certain something, this evening, so like levity, that Jacintha felt both shocked and surprised, and rather inclined to think that a total change in her principles, as well as circumstances, had taken place since she left Wyefield.

Absorbed in unpleasant reflections, Jacintha sat at a window remote from the tea-table, pensively leaning her head upon her hand, and utterly regardless of the lively conversation which was going forward, and which, at first, seemed to render the rest of the party forgetful of her.

She had not sat long here, however, before she was startled by Mr. Loveit, who, approaching her, unperceived, said, as he leaned over her chair, in the words of Romeo, and in a voice which well accorded with these words....

“ Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand,

“ That I might touch that cheek ! ”

Jacintha instantly rose, but was prevented moving from the window, by Mr. Loveit's catching her hand ; who, as he did, declared he envied the person who had engrossed her thoughts.

"Then I assure you," said Jacintha, gravely, and trying to disengage her hand as she spoke, "the person who engrossed my thoughts is not an object to excite envy, for they were employed about myself."

"They were employed then," said he, "by the same charming object that engrosses mine."

Jacintha without seeming to notice these words, repeated her efforts to free herself. Ere she had succeeded, Mrs. Saville suddenly started from a sofa, upon which she had been coquetting with captain Merton, and ran out of the room, calling him after her, under the pretext of deciding a dispute about a picture in the adjoining room.

Jacintha, now insisted on Mr. Loveit's releasing her hand.

"Your commands are absolute," cried he, relinquishing it, yet at the same time placing himself between her and the door, evidently to oppose her leaving him; "the sentiments with which you have inspired me, are not less respectful than tender. But must I ever expect to see a frown upon your brow when I address you? Must the man who feels for you the most ardent passion.... who would willingly resign his fate, his fortunes, into your hands, must he, I say, never hope for any thing like condescension from you....for any relaxation of severity?"

"I must entreat you, sir," said Jacintha, "to desist from speaking to me in this manner; many circumstances render your doing so particularly disagreeable."

She attempted to pass him as she spoke; but, seizing her hands, he forced her to hear a still further declaration of his passion, essaying every art he was master of, to render her propitious to

it ; till at length Jacintha, indignant and provoked, informed him both her heart and hand were engaged, and protested, if he did not immediately suffer her to quit the room, she would call aloud to some one to compel him to do so.

At this threat he released her, and suffered her to leave him. She directly repaired to her chamber, highly incensed at his presumption, as she was convinced he knew perfectly well of her engagement to Egbert, prior to her speaking on the subject ; but still more incensed at the conduct of Mrs. Saville, which had exposed her to it : for it was evident to her, she had quitted the room, in order to give him an opportunity of speaking in the manner he had done. She resolved on remonstrating with her on the impropriety of such conduct, and explicitly telling her, if she subjected her to disagreeable treatment in her house, she entirely did away the obligations she had conferred upon her ; by receiving her into it. She also resolved on not going down to supper ; or, if possible, to avoid doing so, meeting Mr. Loveit again, till she had spoken to her friend in the manner she intended.

This latter resolution, however, she relinquished, in consequence of a message from Mrs. Saville, declaring, that if she persisted in refusing to come to supper (though she pleaded a head-ache as a pretext for this refusal), she would send one of the gentlemen to bring her down ; a threat which, from the humour she was in this evening, it was not altogether clear to Jacintha she would not put into execution ; it accordingly extorted the desired compliance from her. She remained silent and reserved, however, all the time she was obliged to continue at the table ; nor was her manner less cool and distant the next morning, at breakfast.

A considerable time elapsed after breakfast, ere she could obtain an opportunity of speaking in private to Mrs. Saville ; at length, finding she was alone in her dressing-room, she repaired to her from her chamber, where she had been watching for this moment, and found her seated at her toilet, looking over some ornaments, which she began to collect and put up the instant Jacintha entered the room, as if unwilling she should see them. She was not quick enough in her motions, however, to prevent Jacintha from accidentally seeing a small picture which lay amongst them, so extremely like Mr. Falkland, that Jacintha's eyes became rivetted to it, and she involuntarily inquired how it had come into her possession.

"What?" demanded Mrs. Saville.

"This picture," replied Jacintha, taking it from the table.

She turned it as she spoke, and Mr. Falkland's initials, in diamonds, at the back, convinced her she was not mistaken in supposing it had been drawn for him.

"Oh! this picture," exclaimed Mrs. Saville, eagerly snatching it from Jacintha, and throwing it into a box, "why, it was given me by.....by my husband."

"Your husband!" repeated Jacintha, in extreme surprise, and fastening her eyes upon Mrs. Saville.

"Yes, by my husband," said Mrs. Saville, colouring violently, and betraying the greatest confusion; "the gentleman, for whom it was drawn, was a relation of his....Do you know any thing of him?"

Jacintha informed her she did; and added, with a still more scrutinizing look....

"No doubt you do also. You visit, to be sure, at his house, where, I dare say, your old friend, his wife, is happy to pay you every attention."

"No," replied Mrs. Saville, "I do not. There was a coolness between him and Mr. Saville, which prevented any intimacy between our families."

"A coolness," said Jacintha; "it was odd then Mr. Saville should obtain his picture."

"Oh! he got it by chance," answered Mrs. Saville. "But pray," added she, evidently wishing to change the subject upon which they were conversing, "had you not better prepare yourself to take a ride with me this fine day?"

"No," said Jacintha, "I have not spirits to go out. I feel extremely unhappy, and you must excuse me for telling you, you have added to my unhappiness."

Mrs. Saville desired her to explain herself. Jacintha accordingly did, and entreated her friend not to subject her again to the disagreeable declarations of Mr. Loveit.

"You really are an enemy to your own happiness....to your own interest," said Mrs. Saville, "in not permitting these declarations to have proper weight with you. You are rejecting a man who adores you.... a man who would place you in a most desirable situation, for one who does not, I am sure, think of you in the manner you imagine; and who, even if he did, could not, in all probability, from his circumstances, lead you into any thing but distress; and as the poet says....

"Why should you be so cruel to yourself,  
"And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent  
"For gentle usage and soft delicacy,  
"As to encounter difficulties you may avoid?"

"What reason have you for being certain," asked Jacintha, who alone attended to this part of her speech, "that Mr. Oswald does not think of me in the manner I imagine?"

"A convincing one," replied Mrs. Saville. "I will now tell you, since I find you so obstinately bent on sacrificing for his sake your own interest, what I did not before care to tell you, that he left the play-house in order to avoid you."

"How!" cried Jacintha, starting.

"We were scarcely seated," continued Mrs. Saville, "ere he entered the adjoining box; "he saw you as plainly as I now see you. It was the earnest attention, indeed, with which he regarded you, that attracted my notice, and made me watch his motions, and I clearly perceived by his actions, as well as the circumstance of his quitting the box when the play was drawing towards a conclusion, that he at once wished to gratify his curiosity concerning you, and elude your observation. What I have told you, I solemnly assure you is true."

"I don't suppose, replied Jacintha, recovering from the transient shock she had given her, "that you would make any assertion you did not think you had some foundation for. But I am also sure," added she, with a smile, which spoke her confidence in Egbert, and the happiness she derived from that confidence, "that you are mistaken..... You fancied he saw me; but that he did in reality, I cannot believe. His acknowledging it himself, could alone make me believe so. Egbert alone, could persuade me of the inconstancy of Egbert."

"A very short time, I fancy, will prove whether I am mistaken or not," said Mrs. Saville.

"I sincerely hope so," cried Jacintha, with fervour.

"Again I assure you," said Mrs. Saville, "I am not mistaken. I had ocular demonstration of the truth of what I have asserted; and I advise you in time to withdraw a confidence which has been misplaced, and prepare yourself for the disappointment which awaits you; for, depend upon it, you will find Mr. Oswald is not what you now imagine. There is an old saying, and a true one, "that an opportunity once lost is seldom recovered." Be well advised, therefore, and neglect not the opportunity at present within your power, of securing to yourself ease, affluence, and independence...of guarding yourself from the inconveniencies to which the caprice of your friends might again subject you; for to their caprice, though you will not acknowledge so to me, I can clearly perceive your late distressing situation was owing. By accepting the protection of Mr. Loveit, you will secure to yourself all the advantages, the pleasures, which Fortune can bestow; and these too without losing what every woman should be anxious to retain....her liberty."

"Her liberty!" repeated Jacintha. "What, at the expence of her honour?"

"Honour is a term much used, but little understood," said Mrs. Saville. "I cannot think that any one forfeits their honour, who does not act contrary to their ideas of what is right."

"I must hope that you have spoken contrary to your ideas of what is right," cried Jacintha; did I think otherwise....did I think it possible that you countenanced dishonourable designs against a person whom you voluntarily promised to serve and protect, I must candidly declare that no fear, no consideration, should deter me from quitting your house immediately."

"I was only jesting," said Mrs. Saville, with an affected laugh. "The hint which appears to have shocked you so much, was purposely dropped, to hear what your scrupulous virtue would say to it."

"I cannot consider the virtue scrupulous," cried Jacintha, somewhat indignantly, "which would shrink with abhorrence from the meaning it seemed intended to convey. Jestings on moral and serious subjects, appears so like levity, that every woman of delicacy should carefully avoid it; for it is natural to suppose, when we speak lightly, we think lightly."

"For my part," replied Mrs. Saville, with an air of high disdain, "I am not so prudish as to think there is the least harm in a little jesting. You are really quite too rigid in your notions, and I must acknowledge, I think

"Unseemly shews, in blooming youth,  
"Such grey severity."

"Not rigid, but steady, I flatter myself," said Jacintha, rather warmly. "But I see," rising as she spoke, "I prevent you from dressing."

"Stop," cried Mrs. Saville, "I may as well give you now the bill which I paid for you to the trades-people in Oxford-street. It is well I settled it immediately, or I could not have done so at all: for I was yesterday called upon to fulfil an engagement, which I entered into, to a very considerable amount, for a friend. I put off the man, however, for a fortnight, by which time I hope to be able to make up the sum."

"I am extremely sorry," said Jacintha, "that you should have been put to any inconvenience on my account."

“ Oh ! don't mind it,” replied Mrs. Saville ; “ in the course of a few days, perhaps, you'll be able to reimburse me. I exactly wanted what I paid for you, to make up the sum which was demanded from me.”

Jacintha took the offered bill, and withdrew to her chamber, distressed and disturbed beyond expression, at the idea of lying under obligations to a person who seemed so solicitous to make her feel the full weight of them ; but still more distressed and disturbed by the suspicions which began to pervade her mind. She began to fear she had but escaped one difficulty to be involved in another ; and that her present residence was by no means an eligible or proper one for her. The more she reflected on the recent conversation which had passed between her and Mrs. Saville ; the confusion she had betrayed at the discovery of Falkland's picture ; and the vague and unsatisfactory answers her friends in Wyefield always gave to any inquiries that were made after her, notwithstanding their assertion of her being advantageously settled, the more confirmed she became in this idea, and consequently convinced she should lose no time in extricating herself from her power.

But how to do so, perplexed and distracted her. As she sat revolving the conduct she should pursue, a servant, who had been particularly ordered to attend her, entered the room, and desired to know whether she required her assistance to dress for dinner ; adding, if she did, she must either accept it now, or be without it, as she was going away almost immediately.

Jacintha, scarcely knowing what she said, from the perplexity of her thoughts, asked her whither she was going ? The girl pertly replied, she was

going to leave her place, as her mistress had used her extremely ill.

“ People in her situation,” said she, with a toss of her head, “ should be very careful how they behave to their servants ; for it is not every one would like to live with them ; for my part, nothing but being a little embarrassed or so at the time, could ever have made me think of such a thing ; however, I hope I shan’t be thought worse of for living with her a few months.”

Jacintha’s attention became awakened at these words, and she determined not to lose the present opportunity of trying to obtain the information and assistance she required. She accordingly rose, and having bolted the door, she turned to the maid, and entreated her to explain the meaning of her words, assuring her of her secrecy ; and that it was not from curiosity, but the most important reasons, she desired this explanation.

The girl readily complied with her entreaty, rejoiced to have an opportunity of gratifying her malice, by exposing her mistress. She informed Jacintha, that she had never been married ; that her elopement from Wyefield was occasioned, not by the severity of her friends, but the artifices of an officer, whom she had got acquainted with at Chester, and who met her in London, where he soon after abandoned her ; that shortly after his desertion, she was introduced, by means, not necessary to relate, to the notice of an elderly gentleman, whose protection she accepted without hesitation, and into whose favour she so successfully ingratiated herself, that he not only permitted her to take his name, but settled a very handsome independence upon her. Notwith-

standing this, she would often have been involved in very great difficulties, through her vanity and luxurious style of living, but for the large additions other gentlemen, but in particular Mr. Falkland and Mr. Loveit, had made to her income; both of whom had for some time discarded her, and were succeeded by captain Merton.

"I thought indeed, miss," continued the girl, "the moment I saw you, that you were ignorant of the circumstances I have related, or you would never have taken up your abode in the house of such a person."

"I have indeed been greatly deceived," said Jacintha.

"Aye, so I thought," cried the girl; "I had more than one reason for thinking so."

Jacintha earnestly conjured her not to conceal from her any thing in which she was interested; and, after a little hesitation, she confessed having overheard a conversation between Mrs. Saville and Mr. Loveit, by which she understood that the former laboured at present under some pecuniary embarrassments, from which the latter had promised to relieve her, provided she prevailed on Jacintha to accede to his wishes.

This information rendered Jacintha more anxious, if possible, than she was before, to quit her present abode; nothing, indeed, but absolute compulsion, she determined, should detain her in a place where she was so completely in the power of two unprincipled beings. She briefly explained her situation to the maid, and promised to recompense her hereafter, if she would assist her in leaving Mrs. Saville's house, and procuring a residence in some other, no matter how private

or obscure, so it was reputable, until she could regain the protection of her friends.

The girl readily promised what she desired; and it was settled that, as soon as Mrs. Saville went out, which she was preparing to do, with the gentlemen, Jacintha should leave the house. Every thing relative to her intended departure being arranged, the maid proposed packing up some clothes for her; Jacintha consented to her doing so, and she accordingly made up a large bundle of things, from amongst those which Jacintha had bespoke in Oxford-street, and Mrs. Saville paid for. With this bundle she then left the room, and Jacintha immediately sat down to write a letter, which she designed leaving upon the dressing-table for Mrs. Saville.

As a reason for quitting the house, she assigned the conduct of Mr. Loveit, and the encouragement she feared it was likely to receive from her. She warmly thanked her for her kindness, and assured her she would take the earliest opportunity that offered for discharging the pecuniary obligations she had conferred upon her.

With a beating heart she saw her treacherous friend and the two gentlemen drive from the house, and with a still more agitated heart she obeyed the summons of her maid.

The road lay at the rear of the house, and they reached it without meeting any one. Jacintha was sorry to find her companion had encumbered herself with the bundle she had made up, of her clothes, as she thought it likely to retard their speed; and till she found herself in town, she felt she could not overcome the apprehensions she entertained, of again falling into the power of Mrs. Saville and Mr. Loveit. In vain the maid

endeavoured to obtain a seat in some one of the numerous stages that were passing, for her ; they were all full, and she reached Piccadilly completely tired. Here, as she understood she had still a considerable distance to go, she would immediately have taken a coach, but that she had not a shilling to pay for one, and felt unwilling to encroach, farther than was absolutely necessary, upon the kindness of the maid.

Slowly and pensively she pursued her way, ruminating upon the strange occurrences which had placed her in her present unpleasant situation. At length she accidentally raised her eyes, which had hitherto been bent upon the ground in deep meditation, and to her extreme surprise, on doing so, missed her companion. She eagerly looked on every side for her, but to no purpose. She then walked back part of the way they had come, looked up all the streets she crossed, and even ventured to peep into the shops she thought there was a likelihood of her having entered, but without seeing her ; and, after an hour spent in this manner, she was obliged to admit the conviction of her having deserted and deceived her, for the purpose of making herself mistress of the things she carried.

This dreadful conviction nearly overpowered the faculties of Jacintha, and she leaned, for a few minutes, against the palisading of a house, unable to move, or even to think how she should act in the present emergency. The necessity of immediate exertion then became too obvious not to stimulate her to make it ; and (though after the inhumanity she had already experienced in it, her feelings revolted from such a measure) she resolved on proceeding to the residence of Mrs.

Greville, where, she flattered herself, by a representation of the consequences which could scarcely fail of attending a refusal, she might obtain the succour she required. She also indulged a faint hope she might receive some intelligence of Egbert, about whom, she was now convinced, no inquiry had ever been made, by either of Mrs. Saville's friends.

Her exhausted spirits were somewhat revived on reaching Finsbury-square, by finding Mrs. Greville at home. She sent up her name by a servant, who returned in a few minutes, and told her Mrs. Greville was so particularly engaged, she could not see her; nor did she know when she would be at leisure to receive her.

Jacintha, in an agony at this message, conjured the servant to inform Mrs. Greville she had the most urgent business with her....business which could not be postponed. The servant, after a little hesitation, complied with her request, and soon returning, ushered her up stairs into a superb dressing-room, where Mrs. Greville received her.

"So, miss Jacintha," said she, with a cool and disdainful air, as Jacintha entered the room, "pray what is this particular business you have with me?"

Jacintha sunk, almost fainting, upon a chair, and begged for a glass of water.

Mrs. Greville, without shewing the smallest degree of feeling, though the pallid and agitated looks of Jacintha were well calculated to excite pity and tenderness, carelessly rung the bell, and ordered the servant to bring one....Jacintha felt a little revived on taking it, and then briefly informed Mrs. Greville of her present distressing situation.

“ Upon my word, miss Jacintha,” said Mrs. Greville, as soon as she had ceased speaking, “ you must excuse me for saying that I think there is something very strange and mysterious in your conduct. I have thought so ever since I last saw you. It seems to me extremely odd that you should conceal the motives which made you quit Mr. Falkland’s ; the manner in which you got introduced to the lady, to whose house, in Lancashire, you have given me to understand you went ; but still stranger, that you should conceal your residence in town, which you must recollect you refused to tell me. But don’t imagine I wish to discover your secrets. I only hope you may be able to give a satisfactory account of your actions, to those who may be desirous of knowing them. As to interfering in any thing which concerns you, it is totally out of my power. In the first place, I have no acquaintance amongst people who keep lodging-houses ; and, in the second, if I had, I could not possibly recommend any one to them, with whose pursuits and connections I have latterly been entirely unacquainted. With money I certainly should not have refused accommodating you, but I really have none by me at present ; and cannot think of encroaching upon the generosity of Mr. Polworth, to which I am already highly indebted, by applying to him for any ; but I cannot believe you are destitute of friends able, as well as willing, to serve you. I have too great an opinion of your merit to think so. Excuse me for not devoting more of my time to you at present. I was about preparing for a party at the moment you came ; and, indeed, we are now preventing Mrs. Polworth from dress-

ing, as she obligingly left this room in order to permit me to receive you in it."

Had Jacintha been almost certain that death awaited her the moment she quitted the inhospitable house she was now in, that certainty would scarcely have prevented her from obeying the dictates of her proud heart, by immediately leaving it. She rose, in silence, and instantly descended to the hall, in a state of mind bordering on distraction, and with an intention of going directly to Mr. Arden's, where she trusted she should hear something of Egbert. Should she be disappointed....but she would not permit her thoughts to dwell upon the possibility of a disappointment, lest an anticipation of the horrors that could scarcely fail of resulting from it, should overpower her little remaining strength.

As she was slowly pursuing her way thither, her face nearly shaded by her bonnet, she suddenly started on hearing some one speaking behind her, whose voice she thought she knew. She instantly turned round, and found her ear had not deceived her....it was Woodville, indeed, whom she beheld, in company with another gentleman.

In a transport of joy she clasped her hands together. But how impossible to paint her feelings when, instead of finding the pleasure of this unexpected meeting mutual, she saw Woodville turn from her with a look of contempt, and attempt to pass on without taking any other notice of her.

"Woodville!" exclaimed Jacintha, with wildness in her countenance, "Woodville," exclaimed she, almost breathless from surprise and consternation, and laying her trembling hand upon

his arm as she spoke, "do you mean to abandon me? Gracious heaven! Do you know me? Am I altered?"

"I fear so," said Woodville, emphatically.

"Explain yourself," cried Jacintha, "if you do not wish to see me drop at your feet."

"This is no place for explanation," replied Woodville, beckoning his companion to leave him; "but if you permit me to attend you to your residence, I will with pleasure give you any explanation you may desire."

"I know not whether I shall shock you or not," said Jacintha, "by telling you I have no residence. At this moment I know not a house to which I could repair, with any certainty of being admitted into it."

The countenance of Woodville convinced her she had shocked him by what she had said. He remained silent some minutes, and then asked Jacintha whether she would promise, if he procured her a proper habitation, to reveal the circumstances which had placed her in her present situation, and submit herself to his guidance.

"Gracious heaven! what a doubt does this question imply!" said Jacintha. "Can you suppose I would have concealments? Can you suppose I have any reason for concealments from my friends?"

Woodville made no reply; but beckoning to a coach, one immediately drew up, into which he handed Jacintha, and following himself, directed it to Southampton-street.

Jacintha was scarcely seated, ere she eagerly inquired after Egbert, informing Woodville of her having seen him. Woodville evaded answering the inquiry; and, upon her repeating it, he en-

treated her to suspend any further interrogatories till they had got to the place to which they were going.

The coach stopped before a private house belonging to people well known to Woodville, from their having formerly been tenants of his father. Here he occasionally lodged, and here he was certain Jacintha would receive the attention she required. He stepped into it first, in order to prepare them for her reception, and then returning, handed her out, and conducted her up stairs to a drawing-room. The mistress of the house followed with refreshments; and having desired Jacintha to command her services if she required them, withdrew.

Jacintha, with a vehemence, which spoke her strong anxiety to have them answered, now renewed her inquiries about Egbert.

"I cannot answer your inquiries," said Woodville, "till you have related to me the circumstances I am so desirous of learning. I have particular reasons for not doing so before."

Hurt and confused by this speech, Jacintha continued silent many minutes. There was a something in the manner of Woodville, which both alarmed and surprised her; for, as she concluded her letter had done away his suspicions, she could not account for his present coolness... a coolness which, in a great degree, destroyed the pleasure she would otherwise have derived from being under his protection.

"My letter," said she, at length beginning the recital he was so anxious to hear, "informed you of my motive for quitting the kingdom."

"What letter?" cried Woodville, looking earnestly at her, and in an accent expressive of surprise.

"The one I wrote to you from Mortlake," replied Jacintha, "and which miss Woodville was so obliging as to inclose."

"At what time did you write it?" demanded he.

Jacintha informed him. Woodville repeated her words; then resting his head upon his hand, he seemed lost in thought some minutes; after which he entreated Jacintha to commence her narrative, as if she had not written the letter she alluded to.

Jacintha complied with this entreaty, and gave him a circumstantial account of the discovery of her birth, and the various incident it had led to. Woodville listened to her with the most profound attention, and betrayed extreme agitation during her recital. Scarcely had she concluded it, ere he wildly started from his chair, and striking his hand upon his forehead, uttered some broken and indistinct sentences, which increased the alarm his preceding conduct had already given to Jacintha.

She now conjured him, with the utmost energy of voice and manner, to relieve her anxiety about Egbert.

"Jacintha," said he, suddenly turning to her, and clasping her hands between his, "I must leave you....leave you without entering into any particulars about Egbert. You must at present be satisfied with knowing that he has returned in safety. Do not, I conjure you, attempt to detain me; a longer continuance with you, may be productive of the most fa... the most unpleasant consequences," cried he, as if suddenly recollecting himself.

"Oh Woodville! do not leave me in this state of torturing suspense!" exclaimed Jacintha....

"Your words have conjured up the most dreadful apprehensions. Something, I am sure, has happened to Egbert!"

"Nothing, I solemnly assure you, has happened to him," said Woodville. "Nothing," added he, in rather an inward voice, "has yet happened, I trust, that....But I cannot be more explicit at present. In a few days....perhaps a few hours, you may see me again. It is for your own sake I now hasten from you. Of this be assured, I will not return to you without Egbert. Farewel! The people of the house will do every thing in their power to serve and oblige you."

So saying, he disengaged himself from her, and darted out of the room. Jacintha attempted to follow him, wrought almost to distraction by the fears his mysterious words excited; but, in the attempt, her agitated spirits utterly failed her, and she sunk fainting upon the floor, where she was found, a few minutes after his departure, by the woman of the house; who, terrified by her situation, immediately summoned a neighbouring apothecary to her assistance. By his orders she was conveyed to bed the moment she regained her senses, and an opiate was administered to her. She awoke in the morning from the stupefaction, rather than sleep, into which it had thrown her, feverish and unrefreshed. But though so ill she could scarcely move, her strong anxiety to be ready to receive Woodville the moment he came (and that he would come in the course of the day, she hoped and believed) made her rise. The day, however, wore away without bringing him, and her disappointment threw her into agonies almost too great for her to support.

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CHAP. VII.

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“ Wild hurrying thoughts  
“ Start ev’ry way from my distracted soul,  
“ To find out hope, and only meet despair.”  
SOUTH’S FATAL MARRIAGE.

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CONTRARY to the advice of the people about her, after passing a miserable night, Jacintha rose the next morning, and was supported to a sofa in an adjoining apartment. With unspeakable anguish she saw this day, like the preceding one, wearing away, without bringing any tidings of Woodville.

Towards evening, as the mistress of the house sat by her, vainly endeavouring to reason her into composure, a servant entered the room, and informed her there was a woman below wanted to speak to her.

“ Who is she?” eagerly demanded Jacintha, raising her languid head from the arm of the sofa.

“ She desired me to tell you, miss,” replied the maid, “ that she comes from your friend, Mrs. Decourcy.”

“ From Mrs. Decourcy!” repeated Jacintha, in a joyful accent. “ Good heaven! is it possible? Let her come up directly.”

The maid withdrew, and in a few minutes returned, followed by an elderly woman, a total stranger to Jacintha.

"You come from Mrs. Decourcy, you say?" cried Jacintha, rising from her reclining posture, and looking earnestly at her.

The woman curtsied, and said she did. She had been hired by Mrs. Decourcy, she said, to attend her to Portugal; from which kingdom she and Mr. Decourcy had returned a few days back, and were now at their seat in Hertfordshire, whither they impatiently expected Jacintha to follow them.

"Expect me to follow them!" repeated Jacintha, greatly surprised.

"Yes, they do indeed, miss," replied the woman. "I was sent on purpose to bring you down."

"How did they discover where I was?" asked Jacintha, still more surprised.

"It would require more time to tell you, miss," replied the woman, "than I can spare at present: for I received orders to leave town this evening; and a chaise is now waiting at the door for me, in which I trust you will not refuse to accompany me."

Jacintha made no reply: anxious as she was to behold her friend, and pleased as she was to hear she was again permitted to enjoy her society, she felt an insurmountable reluctance to leaving town in her present state of suspense and incertitude about Egbert, especially as she every moment expected Woodville.

Her silence, as well as looks, proclaimed this reluctance; and Mrs. Decourcy's supposed attendant began to importune her to accompany her to the country.

"Indeed, miss," said she, "I much fear my lady will deem it unkind, if you refuse coming to her."

Jacintha sighed deeply.

"I hope not....nay, I am sure she will not," cried she, "when she hears how I am situated. I every instant expect a gentleman, with intelligence of the utmost consequence to me."

"If it is Mr. Woodville you expect, miss," said the woman of the house, who, from the increasing illness of Jacintha, was extremely desirous of getting rid of her, "you'll be disappointed."

"What reason have you for supposing so?" asked Jacintha, in a quick-voice, and with a scrutinizing look.

"A very sufficient one," answered the woman. "I will now tell you what I did not care before to mention, lest you should be still more vexed and irritated than you already were....that an event has taken place in the family of Mr. Woodville, which, I am sure, will engross him too much for some time, to permit him to think of any thing else."

Jacintha eagerly inquired what was the event she alluded to.

"The marriage of his sister," she replied.

"I hope she has not married against his approbation?" asked Jacintha.

"Why, I don't rightly know, whether she has or not," said the woman. "There certainly is something strange and sudden in the affair, as well as I could learn from a servant of Mrs. Derwent's, who called here this morning, and gave me an account of it."

Jacintha, whose own cares never rendered her regardless of the happiness of her friends, as in

selfish tempers is too frequently the case, now proceeded to make some further and more particular inquiries relative to miss Woodville's marriage, to which, however, she received no satisfactory answer; and being at length convinced, from what she heard, that there was no probability of seeing Woodville for many days, and that if her present wretchedness could receive any alleviation, it would be from the tenderness of Mrs. Decourcy, she no longer hesitated about going to her. In a few minutes she was ready to depart; and descending to the hall, found a chaise and four waiting at the door, into which she immediately stepped. She left a message for Woodville, with the woman of the house, conjuring him not to delay giving her the information she required.

As soon as the chaise drove from the door, she again inquired by what means she had been traced to her late residence, and had her curiosity fully satisfied. After receiving the particulars she was desirous of learning, she spoke but little to her companion. Her indisposition of body and mind every hour increased. The more she reflected upon the words of Woodville, the more firmly convinced she was that Egbert was in some unpleasant situation, and she almost repented having left town.

By the time they reached Barnet, the evening was so far advanced, and she appeared so exhausted, that her companion proposed their continuing there that night....a proposal to which Jacintha made no objection. She was not, however, at all better, when she rose in the morning, to pursue her journey.

Absorbed in melancholy reflections, she leaned against the side of the chaise, utterly regardless of external objects; till, beginning to think they were a very unusual time in going from Barnet to Beech-Grove, she looked up, and perceived they were upon a road utterly unknown to her. She observed this to her companion, who, after a little hesitation, said the postillion had certainly missed his way. This he acknowledged, on her calling to him, but said he should soon regain the right road.

Jacintha looked in vain, however, for objects familiar to her, and, in the course of an hour, to her great surprise, perceived they were entering a small town. Ere she could well express this surprise, the chaise stopped before an inn, and the postillion alighting, came to the door, and entreated the ladies to pardon his error, confessing he had come much farther out of his way than he had at first imagined, and could not proceed without changing horses.

Jacintha's companion chid him for his carelessness, and bade him be as expeditious as possible. In a few minutes they again set off, and Jacintha now flattered herself, in a very short time, she should be in the arms of her friend. They travelled mile after mile, however, without entering upon the road she looked for; and when she saw the day declining, without having reached, or even appearing to be near the end of her journey, she became seriously alarmed, and entreated her companion to make the postillion stop at the first inn they came to, that they might change him for one acquainted with the way they wanted to go.

"He has not gone wrong," replied the woman.

“Not gone wrong!” repeated Jacintha. “Why he appears going further and further from Beech-Grove every minute.”

“Certainly,” said the woman, “and in so doing, he only obeys his directions. You are not going to Beech-Grove.”

“Not going to Beech-Grove!” cried Jacintha, with the utmost wildness in her looks. “Whither then am I going?”

“To happiness, if it is not your own fault.”

Jacintha, yielding to her feelings, without considering how very improbable it was that a person who appeared so evidently in the plot against her, would give her the assistance she required, now attempted to let down the front glass, in order to call to the postillion to stop. This she was prevented doing, however, by her companion, who, rudely seizing her hands, declared, in a stern voice, if she was not quiet and passive, she would inevitably draw upon herself treatment she could not at all like.

“Opposition,” added she, “can only be productive of violence. I advise you, therefore, to be resigned to your present situation, particularly as I assure you, no efforts you can make, will liberate you from it.”

Jacintha endeavoured to support her almost fainting spirits, and reason with her companion, upon the enormity of her present conduct. She represented to her, in the most forcible language she could use, the consequences that could not fail of resulting from a perseverance in it; and conjured her to let her return to the place from which she had inveighed her, solemnly assuring her if she did, she would never mention any thing that could injure her.

Her remonstrances, threats, and entreaties, were alike unavailing; and in her agony and distraction at finding them so, she at length shrieked aloud; and after a fruitless effort to disengage her hands, sunk senseless against the back of the chaise.

When she recovered, she found herself in a chamber, supported by the woman who had travelled with her, whilst another, about the same age, administered restoratives to her. Jacintha, concluding she was in an inn, and that this person, who was so busy in trying to recover her, was the mistress of it, began to supplicate her interference and assistance. Her supplications were soon put a stop to, by the woman's coolly telling her she was the particular friend of the person whom she had travelled with, and that the house she was then in was a private one, belonging to her.

Jacintha, on hearing this, wildly demanded whether they had then reached their destination? She was answered in the negative, and also informed, that they had a long, long journey before them. She felt somewhat revived by this information, as she indulged a hope of being able to procure upon the road the succour she required. The woman forced her to lay down upon a bed, and take some refreshment. After resting two hours, they told her she must rise, and recommence her journey. With augmented terror, she found the woman of the house was to accompany them the remainder of the way; she still, however, endeavoured to support her spirits, with a hope of being able to make some successful exertion.

This hope, however, the vigilance and precaution of her companions defeated. Whenever a carriage approached, they drew up the blinds ; seldom stopped, and never except at poor and lonely houses, where the tale they told prevented any attention from being paid to the supplications which Jacintha sometimes, in spite of their threats, addressed to the people. She was represented as a young person labouring under insanity, whom her friends in Scotland were solicitous of having again under their own immediate care, on finding nothing could be done for her in London.

Despair at length succeeded to hope, on finding all her efforts to free herself from the machinations of Mr. Loveit, whom she accused of being the contriver of the present scheme against her, unsuccessful. The agitation of her mind increased her fever, and she was often so exhausted, that she could neither speak nor move ; but, notwithstanding her alarming situation, her companions persisted in pursuing their journey without intermission ; paying to her illness, however, in every other respect, every possible attention.... They positively refused letting her know whither they were going, but neither denied nor acknowledged being employed by Mr. Loveit.

After being many days and nights upon the road, the chaise stopped one evening before a lonely house, surrounded by a wild and mountainous country, and Jacintha was informed she had reached the end of her journey.

Jacintha sighed deeply, but could not speak. She felt as if she was dying ; and in this hour of languor and depression, she scarcely regretted this feeling. Abandoned by her parents ; apprehensive about the welfare of the man she loved,

and whose destiny, if wretched, she had no means of alleviating; beset on every side with difficulties and dangers, she thought it would be a fortunate circumstance for her to be taken from a world, in which she had vainly sought for happiness...a world in which, like poor Orlando, she had nothing; and in which, like him, she thought she only filled up a place which might be better supplied when she had made it empty.

An elderly man came from the house as soon as the chaise had stopped, and she was carried into it more dead than alive. Drops were immediately administered to her, and, in a few minutes she began to revive; but scarcely had she opened her eyes, ere she closed them again, with a shuddering sensation of horror and disgust, on seeing Mr. Loveit enter the parlour.

He dismissed every person from it, but the woman who had been the immediate instrument of his treachery, and then, with the utmost humility, endeavoured to depreciate the just resentment with which his conduct had inspired Jacintha. He pleaded the violence of his passion as an extenuation of it, and assured her he should consider his fortune as a poor equivalent for her favour.

Jacintha at first revolted against speaking to him; but, upon consideration, she thought it would not be adviseable to lose an opportunity, like the present, of trying to make an appeal to his reason. Curbing, therefore, the indignation his language excited, she represented to him how much he had to fear from her friends, and how little he had to hope from her. She advised him, as much for his own sake as hers, no longer to detain her, as it could only be productive of trouble and uneasiness to him; her heart and hand

being both so firmly engaged to another, that even if his addresses were as honourable as they were the reverse, she would reject them.

Time often effected wonders, Mr. Loveit said, and to time he trusted his cause. Jacintha, overpowered by the exertions she had made, or rather her disappointment at finding that exertion unavailing, relapsed into a state of insensibility, and in this situation was conveyed to a chamber. They were compelled to summon medical aid to her assistance, and serious apprehensions were entertained for her safety. How Mr. Loveit contrived to get her into his power, now requires explanation.

Though the accident which befel her in the city, was occasioned by the carelessness of his coachman, it was not this circumstance, neither humanity, but solely admiration, which induced him to offer her his assistance. He endeavoured, though vainly, as has been already mentioned, to commence an acquaintance with her, and felt not only disappointed, but mortified, at the repulsive coldness with which she treated him.

About two hours after they had parted, as he was sauntering through St. James's Park, ruminating on her idea, and fervently wishing she might again be thrown in his way, he accidentally met Mrs. Saville, who, though once a great favourite, was now entirely discarded by him, as he was not more unprincipled than inconstant in his disposition; but, though indifferent to him, he was too gallant to decline conversing with her.

In the course of their conversation, he mentioned the lovely stranger who now engrossed his thoughts. Whilst describing her beauty in the most impassioned language, he was interrupted by a sudden exclamation from Mrs. Saville, occa-

sioned by her surprise at unexpectedly beholding Jacintha.

Mr. Loveit's eyes followed the direction of hers ; and it would be difficult to determine whether joy or astonishment was most predominant in his mind, at finding his charming unknown was a particular friend of Mrs. Saville's, for such that lady declared her to be. This declaration, together with the distress too evident in the looks of Jacintha, inspired him with the most sanguine hopes of succeeding in any designs he might form against her.

Mrs. Saville, in consequence of her unbounded extravagance, was, at this time, involved in very great difficulties. As she was hastening to Jacintha, Mr. Loveit caught her by the arm, and drawing her aside, told her he would bind himself in any manner she pleased, to free her from these difficulties, provided she promised to exert herself in his behalf with her lovely friend, and bring her to accede to his wishes. Mrs. Saville readily promised all he desired. How she drew the unsuspecting Jacintha into his power, has already been related.

Soon convinced that neither her arguments, nor the eloquence of Mr. Loveit, would be able to make any favourable impression upon the mind of Jacintha, it was agreed, that other measures, such as the law gave her an opportunity of using, in consequence of the large sum she had paid for Jacintha, should be pursued, in order to try and force her to act in the manner that was wished ; measures which, in all probability, would have driven the unhappy Jacintha to distraction, and which were only prevented by her fortunate escape from the house of Mrs. Saville.

Her being able to effect this escape, was at once attributed to the assistance of the discharged maid, after whom an immediate search was accordingly set on foot. One of the servants, well acquainted with her haunts, soon discovered, and drew from her every particular necessary to be known relative to Jacintha. Unluckily the house in which she sought an asylum, after the cruel deception and treachery she had practised, was exactly opposite the one to which Woodville had conveyed Jacintha.

Informed of her residence, and of her being at present amongst strangers, which the maid had found means of learning, Mrs. Saville and Mr. Loveit soon contrived a scheme for getting her again into their power. On regaining her, a lonely house of Mr. Loveit's, in the Highlands of Scotland, which had often before answered the purposes of vice, was appointed for her reception. There Mr. Loveit hoped to triumph over that innocence which, had he been endued with the smallest particle of honour or humanity, it would have been his pride, his glory, to have protected.

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CHAP. VIII.

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“ Words would but wrong the gratitude I owe you,  
“ Should I begin to speak ; my soul’s so full,  
“ That I should talk of nothing else all day.”

OTWAY’S ORPHAN.

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JACINTHA continued a week dangerously ill, and often insensible to surrounding objects. At the expiration of this period her disorder took a favourable turn, she regained her perception, and began slowly to recover. With returning health her strength of mind increased. Instead of yielding any longer to despair, which in her, she now began to reflect, would be particularly inexcusable, after the many instances she had received of the goodness and protection of Providence, she endeavoured to support her spirits, in order to be enabled to make such exertions as, in her present situation, were necessary.

From this situation she saw no other method of freeing herself, but by interesting some person about her in her behalf. She despaired of succeeding with any of the attendants. After some deliberation, therefore, she resolved on making an application to the physician who attended her, an elderly man, of gentle manners and prepossessing appearance ; and whose looks, she thought, seemed expressive of regret for the errors which,

it was natural to suppose, from her being the guest of Mr. Loveit, she had been led into.

The day after she sat up, she contrived to find an opportunity of writing a few lines with a pencil, upon the back of a letter which she found in her pocket, explanatory of her situation, and conjuring him, as a man of honour and feeling, to rescue her from it. She slipped it into his hand, without being observed, as he sat by her; and received a look in return, which seemed to say, its contents would be attended to.

She became all impatience and anxiety for the next day; it came, however, without bringing to Jacintha the comfort she expected. The hour in which she usually received a visit from the doctor arrived, without his making his appearance; and when she at length ventured to express her surprise at not having seen him, she learned he had sent a message early in the morning, to inform her he could not call upon her that day; nor, perhaps, for one or two more, in consequence of his being obliged to go to some distance, upon a case of very great emergency.

Jacintha felt rather alarmed by this message; she endeavoured, however, to hope the best, and tried to recompense herself by reflecting, that a very short time, in all probability, would terminate her suspense. She felt so ill, in consequence of the agitation she experienced this day, that towards evening she was obliged to lie down. She was just beginning to obtain the repose she so much needed, when she was startled by some one touching her hand. She started from her pillow, and beheld a young woman standing beside the bed, whom she had never before seen.

Jacintha looked wildly at her, and then round the chamber, and found her usual attendants had taken the opportunity of her being asleep, to leave it. She again turned her inquiring eyes upon the stranger, who, without speaking, drew a letter from her bosom, and put it into Jacintha's hand ; then, with a look which seemed to enjoin her to silence, she hastily quitted the chamber, and gently closed the door after her.

Jacintha's heart throbbed with hope and expectation as she eagerly opened the letter, which contained the following lines :

“ I am happy to find I was mistaken, with regard to you, and that I have been able to render you the service you require. An honourable lady in the neighbourhood, to whom I applied in your behalf, has promised to protect you, till you are restored to the friends from whom you have been so basely inveigled. To-night, the bearer of this letter (as soon as you can find a convenient opportunity for quitting your chamber) will give you any assistance you may require, in getting to your sincere friend, and

“ WELL-WISHER.

“ Remember, the utmost caution is necessary, as I have particular reasons for not wishing to appear in the affair.”

Jacintha's transports, on perusing this thrice welcome letter, were too great for description ; an approaching step, however, made her endeavour to moderate them, lest they should be discovered, and give rise to suspicions, that might defeat the schemes formed for her deliverance. She had but just concealed the letter, when the woman, who

generally attended her, entered. This woman, now that Jacintha was beginning to recover, instead of sitting up with her, slept in a closet adjoining the chamber. Jacintha, in hopes she would follow her example, and thus give her an early opportunity of effecting her escape, pretended to be uncommonly drowsy this evening, and retired to rest earlier than usual.

According to her expectations, the other did the same. As soon as Jacintha had reason to think she was asleep, she left her bed, and dressing herself with as much expedition as she could use, stole to the chamber-door, to listen whether all was quiet within the house. After standing several minutes here, without hearing the smallest noise, she ventured to open the door, and advance to the head of the stairs; but here she stopped, trembling, and irresolute whether she should proceed or retreat.

As she leaned, in almost breathless agitation, against the banisters, a light, suddenly glimmering below, made her look over them, and she saw the young woman who was to assist her escape, in the hall. Jacintha's courage returned on beholding her, and she immediately descended the stairs.

On hearing her approach, the young woman held up her hand to motion her to silence; and stepping softly to the hall-door, opened it for her. To her extreme joy, Jacintha found the good doctor within a few paces of it. He threw a plaid over her, to protect her from the night air, and hurried her to a chaise in waiting at a little distance.

As soon as Jacintha's agitation had subsided, sufficiently to permit her to speak, she returned

her grateful acknowledgments for the services he had rendered her. In reply, he declared himself truly happy in being instrumental in rescuing her from the dangerous situation she was in, and placing her in one, where she would experience not only protection, but tenderness. He informed her, the young woman who had aided her escape, was an under-servant of Mr. Loveit, whom he had prevailed upon to second his intentions, by means that are generally successful; and then proceeded to ask a few questions about Jacintha's connections, which she answered in as brief and explanatory a manner as possible.

They travelled expeditiously, and, in the course of an hour, reached the gate of what, as well as Jacintha could discern by the imperfect light which now prevailed, appeared to be an ancient and extensive edifice.

On the stopping of the chaise, the gate was instantly opened, and the doctor alighting, handed out Jacintha, and led her into a spacious court. Here, beside the old porter, who had given them admission, she saw an elderly woman standing, into whose hand the doctor put hers, and bade her farewell. She was then conducted to a remote door in the building; and, after ascending a private staircase, and passing through many passages, she found herself in a magnificent chamber, where an elderly lady, of a gracious and benignant aspect, received and welcomed her. She interrupted Jacintha's fervent acknowledgments for her generous kindness, by saying, she had but merely performed her duty, in serving a suffering and innocent fellow-creature.

She insisted on her taking some refreshment, and retiring immediately to rest, as she saw she

was ready to sink from languor and fatigue. Accordingly, in a few minutes, Jacintha was shewn into an interior chamber, where she was assisted to undress, by the attendant, who had been her conductress to the lady, and where she soon sunk into the repose she needed.

When she awoke in the morning, she found her standing beside the bed, earnestly regarding her. All that had passed seemed like a dream to Jacintha, and she started with wildness from her pillow, at beholding a stranger. A few words, however, served to recompose her, and rising, she dressed herself, and was conducted through the outer-chamber to a dressing-room, where her protectress sat, by whom she was received with the utmost kindness.

The manner in which she had been drawn into her late perilous situation, was now particularly inquired into, but not more particularly inquired into than related. Jacintha gave a clear, though succinct account of the manner in which she became acquainted with Mr. Loveit, and the arts he had used to deceive and betray her.

The lady appeared violently agitated, as she listened to her, and frequently shed tears. Jacintha was greatly surprised, at the emotions she betrayed, which seemed to her to be caused by something more than common feeling, for the wrongs of a stranger. As soon as her little narrative was finished, the lady rose, and in a voice scarcely articulate, told Jacintha she had important reasons for not wishing to have it known she had taken her under her protection, consequently, she could not pay her all that attention, or treat her altogether in the manner she was certain she merited. Jacintha said every thing

that was proper upon the occasion; and the lady quitted the room, in order to breakfast with her family, leaving Jacintha to the care of her woman.

And now the cause of her agitation was explained. As Jacintha cast her eyes around the room, whilst breakfast was preparing for her, they accidentally glanced upon a large portrait, which immediately fixed her attention, from the striking resemblance it bore to Mr. Loveit. Upon observing this to the attendant, she regarded her for some minutes with an earnest look, and then said,

“You are not mistaken, young lady, in thinking it like him. It was drawn for Mr. Loveit, as you call him.”

“As I call him!” cried Jacintha. “What, is not Loveit then his real name?”

The woman shook her head, but made no reply. Jacintha’s curiosity now became so strongly excited, that she could not rest without having it gratified; she therefore pressed her question upon the woman, who, after a little hesitation, said,

“I see no harm in telling you what, by some means or other, you would sooner or later, in all probability, discover. Loveit is not the name of the person who has acted so vile a part towards you; his real name is Sinclair, and he is husband to the lady who has afforded you her protection.”

“Good heaven!” exclaimed Jacintha, inexpressibly shocked by this information; “had I known this, I should not have inveighed so bitterly against him.”

“His actions speak so forcibly against him,” said the woman, “that it matters not in what terms they are mentioned. He is a bad character

in every respect, and has behaved cruelly to a most excellent wife."

"I am concerned to think she feels his conduct so sensibly."

"She does indeed," replied the woman, "but without resenting it. It is her constant study to conceal his enormities from his friends."

"I am surprised the doctor should think of applying to her in my behalf," said Jacintha, "as he could not be ignorant of the severe wound a husband's baseness gives to a feeling heart."

"True," replied the woman, "but the doctor, though a good man, studies his own interest; and he well knew, that nothing could oblige my lady more, than giving her an opportunity of defeating any villainy of her husband's. Should he ever discover she has been instrumental in defeating his designs against you, I tremble to think of what he may make her suffer; for he is violent and revengeful in the extreme. It is in order to avoid incurring his resentment, as well as to prevent his baseness from being known to his brother, lord Endermay (his opposite in every respect), that she wishes to conceal your being under her care."

"Lord Endermay!" repeated Jacintha, wildly starting from her chair, "his brother! Am I then beneath the roof of lord Endermay?"

"Yes," said the woman, looking aghast, and retreating a few paces. "Do you know any thing of his lordship?...or have you any reason to be alarmed at finding yourself beneath his roof?"

"No," replied Jacintha, recollecting herself, and sinking into her chair almost breathless, from the emotion caused by what she had heard. "No,

I know nothing of his lordship. I have no reason to be uneasy at finding myself in his house."

"You really frightened me," cried her companion, again approaching the table. "I thought you had heard something."

Jacintha, fearful of conversing upon the subject, lest it should lead her to betray what she was so solemnly bound to conceal, checked the inquiries which her heart dictated, and began to ask some questions totally foreign to it. She was inattentive, however, to the answers she received. The sufferings of the unfortunate lady Endermay (which her own had, in some degree, banished from her mind), thus unexpectedly revived within it, engrossed her thoughts almost entirely. She represented to herself the vain expectation, which the unhappy woman indulged of regaining her liberty...the anguish she would suffer when she found they were deceitful. She pictured her in the last agonies of expiring nature, without a friend to sooth her...without a sympathetic bosom to repose upon; groaning beneath misery and disappointment, and accusing her (Jacintha) of having increased her sorrows, and helped to augment a burden before too grievous.

With difficulty Jacintha forbore weeping aloud, at these mournful suggestions of her fancy. She saw, however, she was narrowly watched, and she endeavoured, on that account, to controul her emotions.

Mrs. Sinclair returned soon after breakfast, composed, but with a dejection, both in her looks and manner, which spoke the sorrows of her heart. She began to question Jacintha about her connections, with a minuteness which somewhat

surprised her. Her looks were expressive of this surprise ; and Mrs. Sinclair, appearing suddenly to recollect herself, apologized for the curiosity she had betrayed, which she declared was owing to the striking resemblance Jacintha bore to a lady she had formerly known and tenderly loved.

“ I should like to know who the lady was,” said Jacintha, involuntarily, “ for this observation has been made before.”

“ Ah !” cried Mrs. Sinclair, with quickness, “ I know who made it ; it was Mr. Loveit. Yes, the likeness indeed must forcibly have struck him ; be yourself a judge of it.”

So saying, she took from her bosom a small miniature, and presented it to Jacintha. Jacintha examined it attentively, with a confused idea of having somewhere seen, independent of herself, a person whom it resembled. While she was endeavouring to recal this person to her recollection, she accidentally turned the picture, and perceived upon the back of it, “ E. E.” That it was drawn for lady Endermay, now instantly occurred to her ; and a feeling not to be described, and which she could not account for, agitated her soul, at finding she so strikingly resembled this unhappy woman. Some strange ideas started in her mind, which she quickly, however, endeavoured to banish, as the wild suggestions of a dis-tempered imagination.

She returned the picture in silence to Mrs. Sinclair, and exerted herself to hide the emotions it had caused. It was evident to her, that Mrs. Sinclair was the friend of lady Endermay, and consequently ignorant of her destiny ; certain, therefore, from these circumstances, that was it revealed to her, she would take immediate mea-

tures to redress the poor sufferer, the secret relative to her trembled upon the lips of Jacintha, and was with difficulty prevented bursting from them. She was compelled to dwell upon the solemn vow she had taken to preserve it inviolate....upon the miseries she was told she should doom an innocent fellow-creature to, by disclosing it, in order to prevent herself from yielding to the impulse of humanity; and, with a flood of tears she again resigned the unhappy lady Endermay to her fate.

Those tears, which Mrs. Sinclair imputed to her own sorrows, called forth all her tenderness, and she repeated her assurances of protection to Jacintha, till she was again safe under that of her own friends.

As soon as Jacintha was composed, she wrote an explanatory letter to Woodville, conjuring him, in the most earnest terms, not to delay taking her from her present situation, and relieving her anxiety about Egbert. This letter she inclosed in one to the woman from whose house she had been inveigled, with an entreaty not to let any time be lost in having it delivered to Mr. Woodville.

Mrs. Sinclair again spoke of the important reasons she had (though without explaining why) for wishing to conceal Jacintha's being under her care, in consequence of which, she was under a necessity of removing her to a remote part of the castle; as it would be utterly impossible to conceal her being a resident in it, was she to remain in the apartments she then occupied. On the same account, she added, it would be utterly out of her power to visit her. She expressed the deepest regret at being compelled to act in this manner; and said, at some future time she hoped she should

have an opportunity of endeavouring to remove the prejudice, which, she feared, it might excite in Jacintha's breast against her.

Jacintha, acquainted with her motives for this conduct, assured her to the contrary, and that nothing could cancel the obligations she had conferred upon her. Towards the decline of evening, Jacintha was conducted in silence by Agnes, Mrs. Sinclair's woman, to the part of the castle she was to occupy. After traversing several spacious, though forlorn galleries, they entered a narrow dark passage, terminating in a heavy door, which Agnes having cautiously unlocked, ushered them into a Gothic apartment, in which was a dark closet that served as a bed-chamber. A good fire burned in this room, and Jacintha found refreshments provided for her, besides books, paper, ink and pens, to amuse her solitude.

Though these apartments had not been inhabited for a long while, Agnes assured her she need not fear their being damp, as her mistress and she had contrived to air them well, and had also brought hither a well aired bed and bed-clothes. She mentioned the hours at which she thought she should be able to visit Jacintha in the daytime, and desired her freely to ask for any thing she required.

Jacintha requested to know what she should do if any one wandered this way. Agnes told her she would take care to guard her from intrusion, by keeping the key of the outer door herself. Though, was it to remain within it, she added, there would be but little danger of her being disturbed, as few of the inhabitants of the castle ever visited this part of it.

A small door in a corner of the room attracted Jacintha's attention, and she desired to know whether it led. Agnes informed her, to a very ancient tower, long since consigned to decay.

She remained with her a few minutes, and then bade her good night. Jacintha listened attentively to her receding steps, and heard her securing the outer door with rather an unpleasant sensation, at finding herself thus locked up, and remote from the inhabited part of the mansion. This sensation naturally led to reflections upon the strange occurrences which had placed her in her present situation. From her own misfortunes, by degrees, her thoughts reverted to those of lady Endermay; and again such mournful images rose in her mind, as made her hastily retire to bed, in hopes of losing them in sleep. Her sleeping thoughts, however, were not happier than her waking ones. Frightful dreams tormented and harassed her, and she rejoiced when the return of day-light permitted her to rise.

Agnes came sooner than she expected, to prepare her breakfast. Her extreme languor and dejection did not escape her notice, and she eagerly inquired how she had rested. Jacintha replied, "Very badly."

"Nothing happened to disturb your rest, I hope," said Agnes, with involuntary quickness.

"Happened," repeated Jacintha, "what could happen? No, nothing disturbed my rest but my own unhappy thoughts."

While at breakfast, she ventured to make some inquiries concerning lord Endermay and his family, which Agnes answered in a most unsatisfactory and reluctant manner, and Jacintha accordingly determined not to repeat them. Agnes

staid but a short time with her. She visited her again, in the course of the day, with her dinner, and then left her to a solitude which was more irksome than solitude had ever before been to her, from the anxiety and dejection under which she laboured.

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CHAP. IX.

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“ 'Tis night; the season when the happy take  
“ Repose, and only wretches are awake :  
“ Now discontented ghosts begin their rounds,  
“ Haunt ruin'd buildings, and unwholesome grounds ;  
“ Or at the curtains of the restless wait,  
“ To frighten them with some sad tale of fate.”

OTWAY'S DON CARLOS.

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FATIGUED, both in body and mind, Jacintha, retired early to rest, and soon fell asleep. From this sleep she was suddenly startled by a strong light flashing upon her eyes. It vanished, however, with such quickness, that she was led to believe it was an illusion of her imagination ; and after listening for some minutes, without hearing any other noise than that of the wind, howling without the windows, she again yielded to the uncommon drowsiness which oppressed her.

The next day passed as the preceding one had done. Agnes merely visited her for the purpose of bringing her meals to her ; and, tortured as she was by incertitude about those she loved, it required the exertion of all the philosophy she was mistress of, to support, with any degree of fortitude, her present situation. She endeavoured to divert her thoughts by reading, but too often found it impossible to do so.

The third night of her confinement she was again startled from an uneasy slumber by a light glaring upon her eyes, which had scarcely awoke her, however, ere it disappeared ; but notwithstanding the quickness with which it vanished, Jacintha could not now, as she had done before, believe herself deceived by her imagination, and she became alarmed and agitated. Her mind, weakened by illness and sorrow, could make but little resistance against the influence of terror, and a number of unpleasant ideas started in it.

She mentioned the incident which had alarmed her, to Agnes, the next morning. Agnes listened to her with profound attention, and appeared, for several minutes after she had ceased speaking, lost in thought ; then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she affected to laugh at what she had heard, and told Jacintha she had been dreaming. Jacintha was positive she had not been dreaming at the time she started from her sleep ; but as she knew an illness like that she was recovering from, often rendered people weak and fanciful, she did not persist in attesting the reality of what she had seen.

But, though again inclined to believe her imagination had deceived her, she became greatly agitated as night approached, and could not sleep for a considerable time after she went to bed. The night, however, passed away without any thing happening to disturb her slumbers, and she awoke in the morning rather better than she had been the preceding day.

She still, however, continued extremely weak and low ; tormented by anxiety about Egbert, and scarcely less tortured by the idea of lady Endermay and her sorrows. Her thoughts were

more than ever occupied about her this day, and even at night, after she retired to rest, they still continued to dwell upon her. She dreamed several wild and terrific dreams concerning her, and at length started from her sleep, under the terrifying idea of having seen her approach the bed, while in a deep and mournful voice, she heard her declare, she was no longer an inhabitant of this world, and that her death was occasioned by her (Jacintha's) cruel breach of promise.

It was some time before Jacintha could in any degree overcome the horror this dream inspired. As she was endeavouring to reason herself into composure, and struggle against the superstitious terrors which were beginning to invade her mind, she thought she heard a noise in the outer room, as if some person was walking in it. The night was far advanced; and as Agnes had declared it was out of her power to visit her, except in the daytime, she could not suppose it was her she heard. Her heart began to beat with unusual violence; and gently raising herself in the bed, she parted the side curtains with a trembling hand. The noise ceased for a moment; it then returned, accompanied by a deep groan.

The closet-door stood open, and by the shadowy light which a full moon diffused through the outer apartment, Jacintha, as she instinctively bent forward, perceived a tall female figure, arrayed in white, slowly moving about it, with folded hands, and gestures expressive of deep distress. Upon this figure Jacintha continued to gaze, with feelings which may easier be conceived than described, till she beheld it suddenly advancing to the closet, and at the same moment heard the name of lady Endermay pronounced.

Her senses instantly forsook her, and she sunk fainting upon her pillow. When she recovered, she was astonished to behold the glare of daylight in the outer apartment, and Agnes leaning over her, from whom a joyful exclamation burst, the moment she opened her eyes.

“ I really was never so much frightened before,” cried she. “ I thought you never would recover. What could possibly have thrown you into such a situation ?”

Jacintha in a few minutes, became sufficiently composed to tell her. Agnes listened to her now, as she had done before upon a similar occasion, with the most profound attention, and again attempted to persuade her she had seen nothing but what her imagination, still affected by her late illness, had created.

“ No,” cried Jacintha, in reply to what she said, “ I can no longer doubt the reality of what I saw.”

Agnes persisted in ascribing her terror to a fanciful cause. She assured her no living being but herself had access to this part of the castle.

“ And as to the inhabitants of the other world,” added she, looking earnestly at Jacintha, “ I am sure you have too much good sense to suppose they ever visit this.”

Jacintha sighed deeply, but made no reply. She knew not what to think or to believe ; she felt, however, so terrified at the idea of passing another night in her present chamber, at least by herself, that she conjured Agnes either to have her removed from it, or contrive to stay with her at night.

Agnes assured her it was impossible to do either, as both she and her mistress were narrowly

watched by spies of Mr. Sinclair's, in consequence of his having a suspicion of the manner in which she (Jacintha) had effected her escape, and of her present residence.

"A suspicion," added she, "which, if confirmed, and it could scarcely fail of being so, if your request in either way was complied with, would be productive of the greatest wretchedness to my lady."

Jacintha, on hearing this, ceased to urge the request. Agnes assisted her to dress, and continued with her till she had breakfasted; expatiating all the time upon the fancies which melancholy and illness are so apt to create. Jacintha felt her confinement now more irksome than ever. She endeavoured, however, to support it with patience, particularly as she flattered herself a very short time would terminate it; for she could not doubt that Woodville, upon the receipt of her letter, would take immediate steps to release her from it.

Though, by the arguments of Agnes, she was again almost persuaded to believe her late terror owing to an imaginary cause, she could not behold the approach of night, without dismay and apprehension, nor prevail upon herself to retire to bed till the return of day-light.

The next night did not find her by any means more tranquil than she had been on the preceding one, though that had passed away in quiet; on the contrary, she was rather more agitated, in consequence of having remarked that it was every second night she was disturbed. She sat in fearful expectation, till she heard a distant clock striking twelve. Overpowered by fatigue and watching, she was then beginning to think of retiring to

rest, when suddenly she heard a low noise in the gallery. She instantly started from her seat, and obeying the impulse of terror, extinguished the light, and shrunk into the closet. In a few minutes she heard the door of the outer apartment opened, and, by the faint light which a glimmering fire afforded, perceived the same tall figure that had before alarmed her, advancing into it. She saw it start, look round the chamber with gestures expressive of surprise, and then approach the closet.

Jacintha could no longer controul her feelings; she shrieked aloud, and rushed from her concealment. The figure surveyed her for an instant in silence; then uttering a fearful cry, it turned precipitately, and fled from the chamber. Jacintha, wrought almost to desperation by the ideas it had given birth to, eagerly pursued it into the gallery, supplicating it to stop, and explain the cause of its mysterious appearance.

To her supplication, however, she received no answer; but she still continued to go on, though in her pursuit she was guided alone by her ear, for the gallery was involved in utter darkness; when suddenly she heard a deep groan, and something fall, like a dead weight, upon the floor. She instantly stopped, and stood for a moment confounded and dismayed. Recovering, then, in some degree, her presence of mind, she groped her way back to her chamber, and relighting her candle, returned to the gallery, where she beheld the figure she had pursued, lying prostrate upon the floor. She stooped down, and drawing back a kind of hood which hung over the head, discovered the features of an elderly woman, who appeared in the agonies of death.

Unable to aid her herself, and fearful she would expire if she did not receive immediate assistance, Jacinthia resolved on endeavouring to procure it for her. She accordingly hastened to the door at the end of the gallery, in which, to her extreme joy, she found a key that permitted her to open it; and, with trembling steps and fluttering heart, she pursued her way, as she thought, towards the chamber of Mrs. Sinclair.

After passing through numerous passages, she at length reached a door, near the entrance of a spacious corridor, which, from this circumstance, she was so certain of being the one she sought, that she ventured to knock at it. Upon doing so, she thought she heard a faint voice within, desiring her to enter; not being quite certain, however, that this was the case, she repeated her knock, and immediately heard some one approaching the door.

In the next minute it was opened; but how great was her confusion when, instead of beholding Mrs. Sinclair or Agnes, she beheld a venerable looking man; who, from the description she had received of him from Agnes, she could not doubt being lord Endermay. She instantly started back, and retreated to the gallery into which the corridor opened. Here she paused, from ignorance of the way she should turn, and this pause enabled lord Endermay (who was indeed the person she saw, and in whom the glimpse he had of her features excited such emotions, as for a minute to suspend his faculties) to overtake her.

“For heaven’s sake tell me who you are!” cried he, as he tremblingly grasped her arm, while his eyes were fastened upon her with the most scrutinizing earnestness.

Jacintha hesitated to reply, confused and distressed beyond expression, at the idea of any discovery taking place unpleasant to the feelings of her protectress, Mrs. Sinclair. Her evident embarrassment, as she deliberated about an answer, heightened the curiosity of lord Endermay, and he repeated his question with still greater earnestness.

"I am an unhappy stranger, sir," replied Jacintha, in a timid accent, on finding it impossible to avoid answering him, "whom Mrs. Sinclair, from motives of humanity, has taken under her protection, till I can be restored to my friends in England, from whom some distressing circumstances have separated me."

"And have you any business with Mrs. Sinclair at this late hour?" inquired lord Endermay.

Jacintha replied in the affirmative, and entreated him to have the goodness to direct her to her chamber, for which, she added, she had mistaken his.

"There is no use in directing you to it now," said lord Endermay; "for Mrs. Sinclair was indisposed, and went early to bed to-night."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Jacintha, starting, "what shall I do, if I cannot see her or Agnes?"

"You look alarmed," cried lord Endermay; "do you require the assistance of either?"

"Not for myself," replied Jacintha; "but...."

"For whom?" eagerly demanded his lordship.

"I know not for whom," said Jacintha.

"Gracious heaven! what mystery is this?" cried lord Endermay; "explain yourself, I conjure you."

Jacintha did so as briefly as possible; and lord Endermay, in an agitated voice, called to an at-

tendant, in an adjoining apartment, into whose hand he put the light which Jacintha had hitherto held, and desired him to precede them to the part of the castle she had mentioned.

Jacintha's distress and confusion every moment increased. It was evident to her, from the manner and interrogatories of lord Endermay, that he was determined to discover the circumstances which had placed her under the protection of Mrs. Sinclair, and she trembled to think of the consequences which might result from that determination.

On entering the gallery, leading to the apartments she occupied, lord Endermay dropped her hand, which he had till then retained, and hastily approached her mysterious visiter, who still lay in a state of insensibility. The moment he beheld her face, he uttered an exclamation expressive of the greatest surprise, and from which Jacintha discovered that the unhappy woman was a domestic belonging to the castle.

The servant, not less astonished than his lord, resigned the light he carried, into his hand, and raising her in his arms, conveyed her to the chamber of Jacintha, to which she involuntarily led the way.

"This, then, is the room you occupy?" said lord Endermay, glancing round the chamber as he entered it. "Gracious heaven! I am all amazement. What could Mrs. Sinclair's motives be," added he, looking earnestly at Jacintha, "for lodging you in this remote part of the castle?"

Jacintha affected to be too busy about the senseless object before her, who was gently laid upon a couch in the outer apartment, to hear this question. In a few moments the unhappy creature

began to shew symptoms of returning life, in consequence of the aid that was administered to her; but scarcely had she opened her eyes, ere she closed them again, with a piercing scream, at beholding Jacintha beside her, and relapsed into insensibility.

“It is you who alarm her,” said lord Endermay, addressing himself to Jacintha. “There is something dark and mysterious in this affair, which I am determined to develope.”

As soon as she began to revive again, lord Endermay motioned to Jacintha to retire to the closet; which she accordingly did, trembling beneath the emotions which were excited by an idea that had started in her mind, of some great, some interesting discovery being about to take place, relative to lady Endermay.

For many minutes after the unhappy woman, whose emotions at beholding her, gave rise to this idea, had revived, her reason seemed disordered, and she uttered the most incoherent expressions; all, however, tending to criminate herself, and prove that she had assisted in some dreadful plot against lady Endermay, whose name she continually repeated, declaring she had seen her apparition.

Lord Endermay, whose tremulous voice denoted his emotions, did all in his power to sooth her, and by degrees she came to herself; but when her perception returned sufficiently to permit her to notice the situation she was in, the confusion and terror excited by it nearly overwhelmed her reason again, and starting from her seat, she attempted to leave the room.

“You cannot, you shall not escape me!” cried lord Endermay, seizing her arm. “You have

gone too far to recede...you have given me a clue by which your guilt may be discovered. Enormous, however, as I am certain it is, from what you have said, I promise you my forgiveness, if you make a candid confession of it. If not, if you oblige me to take any steps to ascertain it, be assured the punishment it merits shall be inflicted on you."

She hesitated for a few minutes, as if irresolute what to do; then dropping on her knees, she burst into tears, and protested, if she could be certain he would not punish her in the manner she merited, she would reveal to him all he desired to know; glad of an opportunity of easing her mind of a heavy burden, which had long oppressed it.

Lord Endermay repeated the promise she required; then, raising her from the ground, he reseated her, and endeavoured to calm her perturbations, which would not for some time permit her to enter upon her narrative, or rather confession....a confession by which lord Endermay discovered he had been the dupe of complicated baseness, and that his domestic peace had been destroyed by the machinations of those in whom he most confided.

Ere we touch upon what she revealed, it is necessary to say something of those whose agent she had been.

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CHAP. X.

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“ Thoughts cannot form themselves in words so horrid,  
“ As can express his guilt.”

DRYDEN’S ALL FOR LOVE.

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THE earl of Endermay was scarcely of age, when he succeeded to the titles and estates of his father. He commenced his career in life with every advantage which nature, fortune, and education could bestow, and gave an early promise of being an honour to the race from which he was descended. His father’s death was not by any means expected at the time it took place; and, in consequence of its happening so suddenly, two children, a son and a daughter, by a second marriage, were left totally unprovided for. All uneasiness, however, on this account was removed from their minds, by the promises of the young earl...promises which he most faithfully kept. At a proper age he settled upon his brother (whom he had educated in a manner befitting his birth and expectations) a handsome independence; and introduced him, under the most favourable auspices, to the great world.

To his sister, lady Jane Sinclair, prudence made him act less generously, though not less kindly. Convinced, from her appearance, which was disagreeable in the extreme (being highly deformed

in her person, and forbidding in her countenance) that no man, but a necessitous one, could ever think of marrying her; he resolved to prevent the unhappiness so likely to result from her changing her state, by never giving her a fortune sufficient to tempt any man to ask her to do so, or enable her to quit Endermay castle, which he deemed the most eligible residence for her.

This conduct, which disappointed the matrimonial hopes of lady Jane (hopes which were extremely sanguine, as she was vain enough to imagine herself capable of inspiring both love and admiration), made her conceive an implacable hatred against him, which she had sufficient cunning and policy, however, to conceal; and the earl gave her credit for what, in reality, she had never possessed...sisterly affection and good-nature.

But much as she detested the earl, Sinclair detested him still more. Though his expectations had been more than answered by him, he had early been taught to envy and hate him, by a selfish and designing mother, who detested the earl herself, because he stood in the way of her son, and prevented his attaining the honours she was ambitious of seeing him in possession of. Like his sister, however, Sinclair veiled his real sentiments, and acted in such a manner, as to make the earl believe he sincerely regarded him.

The earl married soon after the decease of his father; whose example he imitated, in making Endermay castle (the seat of his ancestors, and the place of his nativity) his principal residence.

In the course of time his brother also married a very amiable lady, of small fortune, but great expectations. These expectations, however, were

disappointed, and Mr. Sinclair was too much irritated by their failure, to affect any longer, except in public, a regard for his lady, to whom they had been his sole inducement for uniting himself.

He carefully, however, endeavoured to conceal the neglect and cruelty with which he treated her, from all, but in particular from his brother; who, he knew, abhorred any thing like inhumanity or immorality, and whose favour, from selfish motives, he was anxious to retain.

Mrs. Sinclair was scarcely less desirous to conceal his defects than he was himself. She loved him too tenderly to think of exposing him to the censure of the world, and thought, besides, if any thing could touch his heart, it would be gentleness and forbearance on her part. He was too unprincipled, however, to permit her mildness, or uncomplaining submission to his will, to have any effect upon him, and continued to persevere in conduct not more degrading to himself, than injurious to her.

At the particular request of his brother, he continued, after his marriage, to consider Endermay castle, as he had done before it, his home, whenever he was in Scotland. In Scotland, however, he contrived to pass but little time. His having a seat in the house of commons, gave him a plausible pretext for being almost constantly in England; and the delicate state of Mrs. Sinclair's health gave him a pretext equally plausible for leaving her behind him.

But though lord Endermay was his opposite in every respect, though a self-approving conscience and the real esteem of the world was his, he was still discontented and unhappy, in consequence

of his ardent wishes for a family being disappointed...a disappointment which opened the most flattering prospects to his brother, but so materially affected the health and temper of his lady, that the latter part of her life was a burden to her.

At the time she died, lord Endermay was upwards of fifty; but from the regular and temperate life he had always led, he appeared much younger. The alteration in her temper, had latterly rendered him very unhappy; his regret for her loss was consequently not very poignant. Ere long he completely overcame it, and recalled that gaiety and cheerfulness to the castle, in which he delighted, but which, her spleen and ill-humour had banished from it.

Amongst his constant visitors was a gentleman of the name of Nairn, who, a few months preceding the death of lady Endermay, had taken up his residence in the neighbourhood of Endermay castle. He had an only daughter, at this period, about nineteen, remarkably handsome, lively and accomplished. The earl soon began to experience tenderer feelings for her than admiration alone could have inspired. He endeavoured, however, to conquer a passion which, from the disparity of their ages, he could not flatter himself would ever meet with encouragement. Her father, however, who perceived it, notwithstanding all his efforts to conceal it, took such pains to convince him to the contrary, that he at length made proposals for the lovely Eglantine, which were unhesitatingly accepted, and their marriage was soon after celebrated with much pomp and splendour.

This marriage, which threatened to annihilate all his flattering expectations, was a dreadful blow

surprised her. Her looks were expressive of this surprise; and Mrs. Sinclair, appearing suddenly to recollect herself, apologized for the curiosity she had betrayed, which she declared was owing to the striking resemblance Jacintha bore to a lady she had formerly known and tenderly loved.

"I should like to know who the lady was," said Jacintha, involuntarily, "for this observation has been made before."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Sinclair, with quickness, "I know who made it; it was Mr. Loveit. Yes, the likeness indeed must forcibly have struck him; be yourself a judge of it."

So saying, she took from her bosom a small miniature, and presented it to Jacintha. Jacintha examined it attentively, with a confused idea of having somewhere seen, independent of herself, a person whom it resembled. While she was endeavouring to recal this person to her recollection, she accidentally turned the picture, and perceived upon the back of it, "E. E." That it was drawn for lady Endermay, now instantly occurred to her; and a feeling not to be described, and which she could not account for, agitated her soul, at finding she so strikingly resembled this unhappy woman. Some strange ideas started in her mind, which she quickly, however, endeavoured to banish, as the wild suggestions of a dis-tempered imagination.

She returned the picture in silence to Mrs. Sinclair, and exerted herself to hide the emotions it had caused. It was evident to her, that Mrs. Sinclair was the friend of lady Endermay, and consequently ignorant of her destiny; certain, therefore, from these circumstances, that was it revealed to her, she would take immediate mea-

sures to redress the poor sufferer, the secret relative to her trembled upon the lips of Jacintha, and was with difficulty prevented bursting from them. She was compelled to dwell upon the solemn vow she had taken to preserve it inviolate....upon the miseries she was told she should doom an innocent fellow-creature to, by disclosing it, in order to prevent herself from yielding to the impulse of humanity; and, with a flood of tears she again resigned the unhappy lady Endermay to her fate.

Those tears, which Mrs. Sinclair imputed to her own sorrows, called forth all her tenderness, and she repeated her assurances of protection to Jacintha, till she was again safe under that of her own friends.

As soon as Jacintha was composed, she wrote an explanatory letter to Woodville, conjuring him, in the most earnest terms, not to delay taking her from her present situation, and relieving her anxiety about Egbert. This letter she inclosed in one to the woman from whose house she had been inveigled, with an entreaty not to let any time be lost in having it delivered to Mr. Woodville.

Mrs. Sinclair again spoke of the important reasons she had (though without explaining why) for wishing to conceal Jacintha's being under her care, in consequence of which, she was under a necessity of removing her to a remote part of the castle; as it would be utterly impossible to conceal her being a resident in it, was she to remain in the apartments she then occupied. On the same account, she added, it would be utterly out of her power to visit her. She expressed the deepest regret at being compelled to act in this manner; and said, at some future time she hoped she should

in this moment, when he deemed her so unworthy of his tenderness, leaning on the bosom of her supposed lover.

This sight caused such emotions as maddened his brain. Contrary to his first intentions, of demanding satisfaction in an honourable manner, he rushed into the arbour, and while with one hand he tore lady Endermay from the grasp of his fancied rival, with the other he aimed a poinard at his heart. His trembling hand, however, missed its dreadful aim, and but slightly wounded the young stranger in the arm; who, instantly starting from the ground, on which he had been kneeling at the feet of lady Endermay, and on which she had dropped, to all appearance, lifeless, turned upon his defence, and endeavoured to disarm lord Endermay; conjuring him, at the same time, to grant him a few minutes attention, and he would do away the suspicion he saw he entertained. His supplications, however, were unavailing, nor were his efforts to wrest the poinard from lord Endermay, who again aimed it at him, more successful.

In struggling with him, lord Endermay's foot chanced to slip, and he fell to the ground. In his fall, the dangerous weapon he held pierced his bosom, and caused such an effusion of blood, as made the stranger fear he was materially injured. Regardless of any pain he suffered himself, he directly hastened towards the castle, to procure for him the assistance he required; but the alarm had already been given there by an emissary of Mr. Sinclair, who, in pursuance of his orders, had watched the motions of lord Endermay; and, ere the stranger had got half way to it, he was met by Sinclair, and a number of the domestics,

two of whom, by the command of Sinclair, directly seized, and conveyed him as a prisoner, to the castle, whither lord and lady Endermay were both taken, in a state of insensibility.

Sinclair's heart throbbed with hope and exultation, at the situation of his brother. He wore, however, such a semblance of grief, and paid him such tender attention, that he completely deceived all but his own immediate confidants into a belief of his sincerely feeling for him. But, notwithstanding all his hypocrisy, he could scarcely disguise the mortification he felt, when, contrary to his expectations, the surgeon, summoned to the assistance of lord Endermay, declared his wound not mortal. He tried, however, to endure his disappointment with some degree of patience, by flattering himself that the wound lady Endermay's conduct had given to his heart, would prove so.

From the chamber of his brother, he proceeded to the room in which the stranger was confined, to whose wound, from motives which may easily be conjectured, he had inhumanly ordered no attention to be paid. But how was he shocked, how was he surprised, when, instead of a full confession of his guilt, which he hoped to have extorted from him, he heard he was the natural son of Mr. Nairn, who, in consequence of various indiscretions he had been led into by the natural thoughtlessness of youth, and a temper too impetuous, had abandoned him entirely for some time past. Reduced to extreme distress by this conduct, he at length resolved on applying to his sister, lady Endermay, to intercede with his father for him.

For the purpose of making this application, he came in private to the neighbourhood of Ender-

may castle, where, not without difficulty, he found means of soliciting his sister to see him ; a solicitation which she granted without any reluctance, but what originated from a fear of their interview being discovered by her lord, who was so strongly prejudiced against him in consequence of the representations of his father, that she knew he would be displeased if he found she held any intercourse with him.

As they could not in one interview entirely arrange the measures they deemed necessary to be taken to obtain his father's forgiveness for him, it was settled that they should meet again. They accordingly did so, as has been already mentioned, and were unfortunately surprised by lord Endermay.

The second downfall of his revived hopes and expectations were more than Sinclair could bear ; and, after some deliberation, he contrived, in concert with his sister, a scheme not more daring than atrocious, to prevent the innocence of lady Endermay from being cleared....a scheme, which the dangerous illness of lord Endermay, who was utterly insensible to surrounding objects, and the absence of Mrs. Sinclair from the castle, whom he had purposely sent from it on a visit to a relation, gave him but too favourable an opportunity of accomplishing.

In pursuance of it, the unfortunate brother of lady Endermay was forcibly conveyed, the second night of his confinement, to an uninhabited part of the castle, from whence there was no possibility of his making his escape. Here Sinclair determined he should pass the remainder of his life, convinced he could not be in a place more secure, or less liable to inspection.

The next night, the two men who had dragged him to his solitary abode (Mr. Sinclair's valet, and the husband of lady Jane's woman), entered the chamber of his sister, to which no one but lady Jane and her attendant had access, and muffling her up so as to stifle her cries, and prevent any resistance, bore her to a carriage at some distance from the castle, which conveyed her to a distant part of the coast, where a ship, hired expressly for the occasion, lay ready to take her to France, where Sinclair had a relation (the abbess of the convent in which Jacintha sought shelter); to whose care, he knew, he might with safety entrust her.

A letter was left upon her dressing-table, addressed to lord Endermay, in which she informed him, that, unable any longer to support the fetters which an arbitrary father had imposed upon her, she had fled forever from him, with the man whom her heart adored, and to whom her child owed its being.

This letter was the work of lady Jane's head and hand, and so nice an imitation of the writing of lady Endermay, that the quickest eye could scarcely have discerned the deception.

Lord Endermay slowly recovered from the effects of his wound, but never from the shock occasioned by the supposed perfidy of lady Endermay. At first he bitterly regretted her elopement, as it disappointed the revenge he meditated taking; by degrees, however, his resentment softened, and instead of regretting, he then rejoiced at her not having given him an opportunity of gratifying that revenge.

Her father, like him, the dupe of complicated artifice, died of a broken heart, on her account, solemnly protesting, to his last moment, that she

wronged him in accusing him of ever having exercised unjust authority over her; as, had he not believed her affections were entirely disengaged from any other object at the time lord Endermay proposed for her, instead of persuading, he would not have permitted her to accept his hand.

“The task of attending the unhappy brother of your lady,” said Barbara (lady Jane’s woman, pursuing her narrative, which excited in the bosom of lord Endermay blended emotions of grief, horror, rage, and indignation), “devolved upon me... and a most unpleasant one it was; as, exclusive of the constant apprehensions I was under of having my nocturnal visits discovered (for, except at night, I never dared to venture to him), I could not avoid feeling a thousand superstitious terrors, as I traversed the lonely passages leading to the tower in which he was confined.”

“What tower?” eagerly demanded lord Endermay.

“The east tower, my lord, to which that door,” pointing to the one which had attracted the attention of Jacintha, and excited her inquiries, the first night she entered the chamber, “leads. Through a wicket in the door of his chamber, I conveyed to him his provisions, and whatever other necessities he required. His reproaches, his complaints, were so dreadful to me, as were the apprehensions I have already mentioned, that nothing but the great rewards I received for my services, and the still greater I was promised, if Mr. Sinclair ever succeeded to your titles and estates, could have induced me to persevere in my attendance upon him. Latterly my mind has been more than ever disturbed by the declining state of his health, which made me tremble whenever I went to him,

lest I should find him a corpse. Bitterly I now began to regret the part I had acted, and felt such horrors as only those who have a guilty conscience, can conceive. These horrors were not a little augmented by strange and mysterious noises, which, for some nights past, I thought I heard within this chamber.... Oh! my lord, do not imagine I rave when I tell you, that this night,...this very night, I saw the apparition of your lady!"

"Conscience makes cowards of us all," said lord Endermay, in a solemn voice, "and raises phantoms to affright us. But tell me," added he, grasping her arm, and with wildness in his look, "tell me of my child!"

"All that I know concerning her I will tell you, indeed, my lord," cried Barbara, frightened by the wildness of his looks. "The wife of Mr. Sinclair's valet, a woman, whose art and little feeling, rendered her well qualified for the trust reposed in her, was the person appointed to deliver lady Endermay into the hands of the abbess. On board the ship your poor lady was taken ill, in consequence of the terror she suffered, and delivered of a daughter, who, notwithstanding her premature birth, was a lovely infant."

"And this infant.....this precious child," cried lord Endermay, starting from his chair, and traversing the room with disordered steps, "I shall never behold!.... Oh wretches!... Oh barbarians!"

"Hope the best, my lord," said Barbara, tremblingly. "Providence, which, by such wonderful means, has brought about the vindication of your lady's innocence, may have preserved your child, to be the comfort of your latter days, and recompence you for all your troubles."

"Proceed!" cried lord Endermay, reseating himself.

"There was a sailor's wife on board the ship, with an infant at her breast; and it occurred to Mrs. M'Neil, that she could not find a better person than this woman to give the child to (with whom she was vested, with full power to do what she pleased), nor a better opportunity of disposing of it than the present. She accordingly sounded the woman, and finding her ready to accede to the proposal she was about making her, she informed her the child was the offspring of guilt and indiscretion, whose connections, in consequence of its illegitimate birth, being determined never to acknowledge it, had lodged five hundred guineas in her hands, to be given to any person who would take charge of it, and bring it up as their own. This the woman did not hesitate promising, and to her it was consigned."

"And has she never been heard of since?" demanded lord Endermay, again starting from his chair, and almost breathless with agitation.

"Never, my lord; there has been no inquiry made after her."

"Oh cruelty unexampled!" cried lord Endermay, clasping his hands in agony together.

"Do not despair, my lord," said Barbara; "you may yet be able to discover her."

"How is it possible to do so?" said lord Endermay, "without having any clue by which she may be traced?"

"Though Mrs. M'Neil would not acknowledge so to me, I am convinced she knows the name of the woman to whom she gave her," replied Barbara, "and many other particulars necessary to be known, and which I dare say you'll

be able to extort from her ;...but even should you not, you should not despair, as she acquainted me with a circumstance which, I think, may bring about the discovery you desire."

"What circumstance?" eagerly demanded lord Endermay.

"She told me that the child was marked, in a very remarkable manner, a little above her left elbow, with a cherry. This mark may....."

Here she was interrupted by Jacintha, who rushing from her concealment, fell panting upon the bosom of lord Endermay. Barbara uttered a piercing shriek the moment she beheld her, and again fainted away.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed lord Endermay, trembling beneath his lovely burden, "what is the cause of this emotion?"

Jacintha started from him, and baring her left arm, laid her hand expressively upon it.

"Oh heavens!" cried lord Endermay, "what do I behold? Do I see aright? Do I behold the mark said to be impressed upon the arm of my child? This mark...the likeness too so great. Oh yes, you are her! You are the daughter of my Eglantine....my long-lost child!"

"Oh! could I hope so," said Jacintha, with uplifted hands, as he strained her to his breast; "but I fear....I fear to indulge such a hope....convinced, as I am, that I could less bear the disappointment of it, than of any other."

"You are then ignorant of your parents?" exclaimed lord Endermay. "Oh, this circumstance," continued he, not permitting her to interrupt him, "confirms the assurance which the others have already given me, of your being mine."

“My lord,” replied Jacintha, “I will, if you please, reveal to you my history, which, though short, has been a strange, eventful one. You will then be better able to judge, than at present, whether the idea which now agitates us both, is well or ill-founded.”

Lord Endermay, leaving his valet with the still insensible Barbara, conducted Jacintha to a dressing-room adjoining his chamber; where, as briefly as possible, she gave him the particulars she had promised. Though his heart sunk when he heard of her being born in Ireland, yet still her striking likeness to lady Endermay, and the mark upon her arm, kept hope from utterly expiring within it.

The moment she had finished her narrative, unable to endure a much longer continuance of his present torturing anxiety and suspense, lord Endermay hastened from her, though daylight was but just beginning to dawn, to call a servant, by whom he sent a message to his chaplain, desiring to see him immediately. The chaplain, not a little surprised at this message, instantly rose to attend him; and, on entering his dressing-room, was still more surprised by beholding Jacintha in it, than he had been by his message.

Lord Endermay explicitly acquainted him with the discovery he had made, instructed him to visit the unfortunate Nairn, administer to him all the comfort in his power to bestow, and, at a proper hour, have Mrs. M'Neil brought to the castle, to be interrogated relative to the woman to whom she had given his child.

As soon as he could do so, without exciting any alarm, lord Endermay sent to request Mrs. Sinclair would favour him with a few minutes conver-

sation in her dressing-room. Mrs. Sinclair, who by this time was up and dressed, returned for answer, she should be happy to see him whenever he pleased. He accordingly repaired to her ; and, in as brief a manner as possible, related the events of the preceding night.

Mrs. Sinclair was overwhelmed with confusion and regret by what she heard ; for not all the enormities of her husband had been able to subdue her affection for him, or prevent her from regretting the shame and infamy to which she now saw him exposed. Lord Endermay endeavoured to calm her emotions. He assured her, on her account, he would not punish his brother in the manner he merited, or hold him up to public scorn ; but, at the same time, declared, during his lifetime, he never should enter Endermay castle again ; in which, he added, she would always be a welcome resident.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked him, as well as the perturbation of her spirits would permit her to do, for his kindness, and endeavoured to derive consolation from the assurances he had given her relative to her husband. She felt more shocked than surprised, by what he told her, as she long suspected Mr. Sinclair of having contrived some scheme to injure lady Endermay ; and this suspicion had infused such a superstitious dread into the mind of Agnes, who was the confidant of her lady, that she could scarcely prevail upon herself to stir without some person with her after it was dark, and readily believed Jacintha had seen something supernatural in her chamber, though she used all her eloquence to persuade her to the contrary. In this belief she was confirmed, by imagining no one but herself

had a key to the part of the castle Jacintha was lodged in.

Lord Endermay mentioned to Mr. Sinclair the ideas he entertained respecting Jacintha, and was delighted to hear she had also been struck by her resemblance to lady Endermay.

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CHAP. XI.

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“You gods, look down,  
“And, from your sacred vials, pour your graces  
“Upon my daughter’s head.”

SHAKSPEARE.

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AGNES was sent to conduct Jacintha to Mrs. Sinclair’s dressing-room, where Mrs. Sinclair, prepossessed with the idea of her being lord Endermay’s daughter, received her with mingled confusion and tenderness.

Lord Endermay continued with them till Mrs. M’Neil’s arrival at the castle. She came totally unsuspecting of the purpose for which she was sent. Like Barbara, she soon perceived that a candid confession of her guilt could alone save her from the punishment she deserved. She accordingly made a merit of necessity, and throwing herself upon the mercy of lord Endermay, revealed to him all the particulars he was desirous of knowing.

In consequence of her information, messengers were immediately dispatched to a small village upon the coast, about fifteen miles from Endermay castle, where, she said, the woman had informed her she resided, at the time she committed the child to her care.

In the course of the day, the chaplain, accompanied by proper attendants, left the castle, to em-

bark, from the nearest port, for France, for the purpose of liberating the much-injured countess, the present state of lord Endermays's mind rendering him totally unfit for such an undertaking.

Towards the close of day, the domestics, who had been sent to inquire after the nurse of his child, returned, bringing her, to his unspeakable joy, along with them, and another woman, whom she called her sister. They both appeared greatly confused and embarrassed on being brought before lord Endermay, and it was some time ere he could prevail upon them to speak. At length, re-assured, in some degree, by the gentleness he forced himself to assume, and the rewards he promised if nothing was concealed from him, the nurse candidly confessed she had parted with his child.

"Soon after our return from France," said she, "I accompanied my husband in a voyage to the southern part of Ireland, taking your child along with me. My sister was then the wife of a soldier, whose regiment lay at no great distance from the place where the ship had anchored; I accordingly took this opportunity of going to see her, and naturally let her into the secret concerning the child I was nursing; she, in return, told me a story, not less curious, about an infant she had at her breast. This poor infant was seized with convulsions, and died suddenly, whilst I was with her. My sister greatly lamented her death, as, had she lived, she said, she was certain she would have been the making of her fortune. Upon this, wishing to serve my sister, and not over-desirous of more trouble than what my own children gave me, I told her she should, if she pleased, have the child I was nursing, about whom, I was certain, no inquiries would ever be made, to supply the place of the one

she had lost. She eagerly embraced the proposal, as there was no danger of the deception being discovered, the children being about the same age, and like each other. Accordingly, the place of little Jacintha was supplied by your daughter Eglantine, to whom I gave that name, in consequence of hearing it mentioned by the poor lady, her mother. My sister will now inform your lordship of.....”

Here lord Endermay feebly extended his hand to motion her to silence, any further information being unnecessary ; and, overpowered by the excess of his joy, at finding his hopes relative to Jacintha realized, he fainted away. As soon as he was brought to himself, he returned his fervent, his grateful acknowledgments to Heaven, for the preservation, the restoration of his daughter, and desired to be supported to the apartment where she sat.

Lord Endermay, unable to speak on entering the room, paused near the entrance ; and, while the big tears coursed one another down his pale and furrowed cheeks, he extended his arms to Jacintha.

Jacintha started from her chair, and surveyed him with wildness in her look. She panted, she trembled, and was ready to sink beneath the mingled emotions of hope and fear, to which the expression of his countenance gave rise.

“ My child, my Eglantine !” at length exclaimed lord Endermay, “ wilt thou not approach to receive the blessing of a father ? Thou art mine ....thou art my child....thou art my long-lost daughter !”

The apartment resounded with the shriek which burst from the lips of Jacintha. She flew, rather

than sprung into the arms of her father, and nearly fainted on his bosom. Then, sinking at his feet, she passionately embraced his knees, and called upon him again to acknowledge her. Lord Endermay sunk upon his knees beside her.

“Acknowledge thee,” he said, “yes, with pride ...with rapture...with unutterable joy, I acknowledge thee, my child! Oh God!” he continued, as he strained her to his bosom, “pour down thy choicest blessings on her head! As thou hast conducted her with honour and safety through the thorny paths of adversity, so still continue to guide and protect her through the flowery, but more dangerous paths of prosperity! Render her worthy of happiness herself, by continuing to her a disposition which will lead her to dispense it to others; and still make her remember, that those who place their trust in thee, are never disappointed!”

On this scene it is not necessary to dwell any longer; suffice it to say, that such proofs of Jacintha's birth were procured, as put it out of any person's power to doubt or dispute it; and that she was publicly introduced to the numerous relatives and dependants of the house of Endermay, as lady Eglantine Sinclair, the daughter and heiress of the earl of Endermay.

The congratulations which she and her father received, were not more numerous than sincere; for as Sinclair was almost generally disliked, so the disappointment of his expectations was consequently rejoiced at. Nothing but the absence of lady Endermay, and the apprehensions that were entertained about her, prevented public rejoicings from taking place in the castle and its environs, at the unexpected restoration of the earl and his daughter to each other.

Overwhelmed with shame and regret, Sinclair withdrew in secret from the neighbourhood, bitterly regretting the hour which had introduced him to his niece, by whose means the discovery of his baseness, he knew, had been brought about; and soon after closed his iniquitous life upon the continent.

Not all the entreaties of lord Endermay and Jacintha (or Eglantine, as we must now call her) could prevail upon Mrs. Sinclair to remain in the castle. Her heart revolted from the idea of continuing in a place where the baseness of a husband, she could not cease regarding, was the theme of every tongue. She accordingly repaired, a few days after the discovery of Eglantine's birth, to the house of a relation, at some distance from it, where she spent the residue of her life, often visited, and guarded from every pecuniary distress, by the generosity of the earl and his daughter.

Lady Jane Sinclair also left the castle, not from inclination, however, but necessity. Her brother settled her in a decent retreat, in another part of the country, but never suffered her again to approach his residence. All the under agents in the plot, against his domestic happiness, he also provided for; but, like lady Jane, banished them his presence forever.

The unfortunate Nairn, in consequence of the tender attentions which were paid him, soon regained that health which long confinement and neglect had deprived him of. Lord Endermay insisted on his residing entirely with him, and made him every amends in his power, for the sufferings he had drawn upon him.

At the expected time, which, as it approached, increased the perturbations of lord Endermay and

Eglantine, the chaplain returned, and completed the happiness of his patron, by putting into his arms his much injured lady ; altered, indeed, from what she was at the period they were separated, but infinitely more interesting, more precious to his heart now, than she had ever been in all the pride of youth and blooming beauty.

Over the scene which ensued, I shall pass, as conscious of its far exceeding my powers of description. Who, indeed, could attempt, with any hope of doing them justice, to describe (and where we cannot do justice, it is surely far better to let the imagination of our reader paint for us) the feelings of an amiable woman restored to the tenderness she valued, the reputation she prized, the friends she regarded ; or those of an adoring husband, clasping to his bosom a long estranged wife, whose loss he had never ceased regretting, even when he thought she was undeserving of that regret ?

As soon as their first transports had a little subsided, lady Endermay turned her inquiring eyes round the apartment, from which, it was previously settled, Eglantine should be kept till her mother was a little prepared to behold her ; and her countenance evidently changed at not finding within it an object at all resembling the one she looked for.

“ I see...I see,” cried she in a melancholy voice, “ my fears were just ; but let me not murmur at the decrees of Providence.”

“ Murmur !” repeated lord Endermay, “ no,” continued he, clasping her hand in his, as he looked up to heaven, “ with me extol its goodness.... that goodness which has enabled me to give joy to your heart, by preserving to us a treasure more

precious than the wealth of worlds. Yes, my love...yes, my Eglantine, I have a daughter to present you! the fair resemblance of yourself, and every way worthy of your affection."

"Give her...give my child to my arms!" exclaimed the almost fainting lady Endermay.

Lord Endermay, unable to move, almost to speak, motioned to one of his surrounding friends to go for Eglantine, who accordingly withdrew, and in a few minutes returned, leading her in.

Lady Endermay sprung forward to meet her; but, instead of embracing her, the moment she cast her eyes upon her, she started back.

"Can I believe my eyes?" she cried, with a look of wild surprise. "Is this my daughter?"

Eglantine advanced to her, and kneeling at her feet, tremblingly clasped her hands between hers, and bathed them with tears.

"Oh transport!" exclaimed lady Endermay, "she is my child! Enable me, gracious Heaven!" she continued, falling upon her bosom, "to support, with some degree of calmness, the great...the unexpected happiness of finding a daughter in her whom my heart felt interested about, ere it knew she had any claim, from nature, upon its tenderness.

As Eglantine had never mentioned her interview with her mother (not from conceiving herself any longer bound to secrecy concerning her, but merely from a fear of affecting her father too severely by a description of her sufferings, which she could not have avoided giving, had she acknowledged seeing her), these words of lady Endermay required an explanation, which was demanded, and given as soon as she had regained some degree of composure.

Blessed with what she had so long sighed for... parental tenderness; delivered from dependence; and secured from again experiencing pecuniary distresses, the heart of Eglantine would now have expanded to felicity, but for the dreadful anxiety she suffered about Egbert; concerning whose fate she was still kept in total ignorance by the obstinate silence of Woodville, though, upon the discovery of her birth, she had again written to him, acquainted him with that discovery, and conjured him, in the most earnest manner, to relieve her uneasiness about his friend.

The heavy cloud upon her brow, and the deep dejection into which she often sunk, could not escape the watchful eye of those who depended upon her for happiness. She had hitherto borne to say much of Egbert, trusting, from day to day, that he would arrive to speak for himself. But now, in reply to the anxious inquiries of her parents, she freely revealed the cause of her uneasiness, declared her long engagement to Egbert, and described him in such colours as excited the warmest interest in his favour, and made them readily promise to do every thing in their power to promote his felicity and hers. In pursuance of this promise, a day not far distant, was fixed for the commencement of a journey to London.

On the eve of their intended departure from the castle, a letter, with the London post-mark upon it, was put into the hand of lady Eglantine; she tore it open in a tremor, which was rather increased than diminished, by finding it from Mrs. Decourcy, instead of Woodville, as she expected.

It began with the most fervent congratulations upon the happy revolution in her affairs...a revolution not more unexpected or pleasing, Mrs.

Decourcy said, than that which had taken place in her own situation, in consequence of a letter from lady Dunsane to her brother, containing a candid confession of all the errors of her youth... a confession, which entirely removed the suspicions he had so long entertained, to the prejudice of his domestic happiness.

“ In this letter,” proceeded Mrs. Decourcy, “ lady Dunsane not only revealed her early indiscretions, and the still greater errors she was led into by avarice and ambition, but the cruel and treacherous manner she behaved to you, when decoyed into her power, by the artifices of lord Gwytherin. She also related the particulars of your interview with her, and the means by which she understood you had effected your escape from the chateau, where she confined you.

“ It will, no doubt, fill you with astonishment,” continued Mrs. Decourcy, “ when I inform you that Henri, your generous deliverer from a cruel captivity, is heir, not only to the title of Dunsane, but to immense possessions, which the basest schemes have for some years kept from him. His story is briefly as follows: *his father*

“ The father of his mother and of the late earl of Dunsane, were brothers. Her father was the eldest, and she (his only child), by succeeding to his estates, left the title, which devolved to her cousin, scarcely worth his acceptance. She was under age at the time her father died; and the marquis de Montalde, a near relation of her mother, was appointed her guardian. In pursuance of a solemn injunction she received from her father, never to have any intercourse with her cousin, who was considered a most dissolute character, and never permitted to visit at his house,

she refused to see him, though he repeatedly solicited her to do so. He at length contrived, notwithstanding the vigilance of the marquis (who, apprised of his motives, for desiring to become acquainted with his ward, took care to make her observe the prohibitions of her father), to introduce himself to her, and so completely ingratiate himself into her favour, that she consented to give him her hand in private, and thus put him into possession of what had alone made him solicitous for an alliance with her...her large fortune.

“ His indifference for her was increased, soon after their marriage, by the violent passion he conceived for miss Decourcy, with whom, about this period, he became acquainted. Fertile in resources, it did not require much deliberation, to arrange a plan for enabling him to gratify his inclinations. He proposed a tour of pleasure to his unsuspecting lady, then in a state which, had he possessed the least degree of feeling, would have interested him about her. Taking with them a few chosen domestics, he repaired with her to a solitary chateau, in the Pyrenees, (the only possession he inherited from his father), where he cruelly consigned her to lasting confinement. He had then a report of her illness propagated in the neighbourhood they had left... which was soon followed by an account of her death; and shortly after he returned home, with well-dissembled sorrow in his face, but real joy in his heart, at the success of his schemes. As soon as decency would permit, the appearance of which he was studious to retain, he offered his hand to miss Decourcy, and was accepted, contrary to the advice of her brother, who had heard

his character, and consequently detested the idea of her being allied to him.

“ The anguish his unfortunate lady experienced, at finding herself so cruelly deceived and abandoned, for some time disordered her reason. In this unhappy situation, while labouring under a temporary derangement, she became the mother of a lovely boy, and, in consequence of her malady, was easily led to believe, the moment after he was born, he had expired. Instead of breaking into murmurs or complaints, on regaining her senses, she submitted with patience to a fate, which she deemed a just punishment for her disobedience to her father. Nature, however, not to be deceived by any artifice, early attached her to her child, though represented to her, in pursuance of the orders of her inhuman husband, as the son of the people who took care of her. Her only pleasure was derived from cultivating and improving his mind; and the education she gave him, joined to his natural abilities, rendered him well qualified for the situation he was destined to fill.

“ By the perfidy of one of the confidants of lord Dunsane, the marquis, after a lapse of many years, obtained a knowledge of her wretched situation. Burning with indignation, he set out for the place of her confinement; but, unfortunately, all his intentions in her favour were defeated by the machinations of lord Dunsane, who, having received an intimation of the discovery he had made, timely apprized the people at the chateau of the visit he was about making to it. In consequence, lady Dunsane was removed to a dungeon, in a remote tower belonging to the building, where no appre-

hensions were entertained of her being sought for, and where she soon closed her calamitous life.

“ The marquis returned from his unsuccessful search, fully determined to investigate the mysterious fate of his unfortunate relative, and bring to the punishment they merited, all who had been accessory to injuring her. But, alas ! this determination was over-ruled by self-interest. He was a man of pleasure, and had so deeply involved his fortune, that at this time he was in a most embarrassed situation.

“ From this situation, lord Dunsane (who possessed neither delicacy nor honour, and judged of others by himself) explicitly informed him he should be extricated, if he promised to remain silent concerning his late ward. The offer was too tempting to be refused ; and, in order to silence any unpleasant rumours, he suffered himself to be still further prevailed upon by lord Dunsane, to appear to the world as his particular friend.

“ His motives for desiring an union with lady Dunsane, upon the decease of her lord, have been already mentioned, as also hers for consenting to it. On no other conditions, he assured her, would he any longer keep that secret, on which she knew so much depended ; for it had for some time been entrusted to her.

“ As Henri was pursuing his way from Calais, to the place where he hoped to obtain a passage to the East-Indies, it was his good fortune to render a singular service to the marquis de Montalde, who, but for his exertions, would have been precipitated down a tremendous precipice, in his carriage, in consequence of his horses being frightened by a noise on the road. Penetrated with gratitude, the marquis invited him to his

chateau, which was at no great distance from the place where the dreadful accident was so near happening. Henri accepted his invitation; and the elegance of his manners, so little corresponding with the coarseness of his dress, and still more, the striking resemblance he bore his unfortunate mother, awakened the curiosity of the marquis, and led to inquiries which ended in the discovery of his birth. The marquis hesitated for some time, whether or not he should reveal it to him; pity and remorse at length triumphed over avarice and ambition, and he at once delivered his conscience of a heavy burden, which had long oppressed it, and obeyed what it was evident to him was the will of Providence, by the manner in which Henri had been thrown in his way.

“Lady Dunsane, overwhelmed with shame, at the discovery which took place, immediately formed a resolution of retiring, for the residue of her life, to a convent. Henri acted most nobly; he secured to her and her daughters an ample provision, and relieved the marquis from all his embarrassments.

“Upon the receipt of the countess’s letter, we hastened our return to England,” proceeded Mrs. Decourcy. “On our arrival in London, we lost no time in sending for you to Mrs. Falkland’s, where we naturally concluded you were. Our consternation at finding you had left her house, and were gone no one knew whither, may be easier conceived than described. Our agonizing fears about you, were at length relieved by Woodville’s enclosing the letter he received from you, to us.

“Ere I bid you adieu, I must inform you we had not been many days in London, when we

were most agreeably surprised by a visit from lord Dunsane, who obtained our address from Mr. Decourcy's agent, to whom, you may remember, you gave him our direction. It is unnecessary, I am sure, to say we received him with every demonstration of pleasure. Had his own merits been less, we should still have been delighted to see, and shew every attention to him, for the essential services he rendered to a person so dear to us as you are. He mentioned his intention of residing in future in England, to which he professed himself extremely partial....a partiality originating, I fancy, from the still greater he has conceived for one of its fair natives; who that is, I leave you to guess."

Mrs. Decourcy concluded her letter with an earnest request for Eglantine to write to her immediately, and inform her whether she had any idea of visiting London soon, as, if not, she and Mr. Decourcy would directly prepare for a journey to Scotland.

This letter threw Eglantine into such agonies, from the apprehensions it excited by its total silence concerning Egbert, and the manner in which it mentioned Woodville to have acted, as made her hastily retire to her dressing-room, to prevent her parents from being pained by beholding distress which they could not relieve. She had not been here above half an hour, when she heard a hasty step approaching, and in the next moment the door was thrown open by her mother. Eglantine started, and averted her head to conceal her tears.

"I am come, my dear child," said her mother, "to inform you your father has changed his mind, and will not go to London."

“Not go!” repeated Eglantine in a faint voice, and turning to her mother.

“No,” said lady Endermay, “he thinks a journey thither quite unnecessary.”

“Unnecessary!” again repeated Eglantine.

“Yes, and so will you, I am sure,” replied her mother, “when you hear his reason for thinking so.”

The smile which accompanied these words, caused such emotions in the heart of Eglantine, as nearly overpowered her.

“My love, my Eglantine,” cried her mother, clasping her arms around her, “how do I rejoice at being able to give you joy....at being able to inform you, that he for whom you suffered so much anxiety, is safe....is well....is.....

Eglantine heard no more; her spirits sunk beneath the sudden revolution in her feelings, and she fainted upon the bosom of her mother. How impossible to speak her transport when, on recovering, she found herself in the arms of Egbert! Neither, for many minutes, were able to give utterance to their feelings; and both, in this blissful moment, found themselves amply recompensed for all their sufferings.

“May the happiness I now witness be as permanent as it is pure!” cried the venerable lord Endermay (as soon as the attendants, who assisted in recovering Eglantine, had withdrawn.) “Bless, Oh God!” he continued, looking up to heaven, and folding their united hands in his, “bless these my children! May they never forget the gratitude they owe thee for thy protection, through the difficulties and dangers they experienced! May that confidence in each other, which was so great a comfort to them, throughout all these

perils and distresses, never be diminished ! and may they live long, a blessing to one another, and to all connected with them !”

As soon as Egbert was a little composed, he gratified the curiosity of Eglantine, by relating to her the circumstances which had caused her to be so long tormented with anxiety and apprehension about him.

“ I was beginning to despair of ever recovering any part of my lost property,” said he, “ and in consequence, to think of leaving the West-Indies, when I received a letter from the marquis of Methwold, written, in consequence of the death of lord Augustus Oswald, to entreat me not to delay returning to England, that he might have the pleasure, ere he died, of publicly acknowledging me as his heir, and personally imploring my forgiveness for his neglect and unkindness to my parents and me, which had, in a great measure, been occasioned by the artifices of his son and grandson ; the latter of whom declared, in his last moments, that they had both contrived to keep back all the letters that were written to soften the marquis, or try to interest him in my behalf. You may be sure I did not hesitate to comply with this entreaty ; but, notwithstanding the promptitude with which I obeyed it, I arrived but in time at Methwold castle, whither he returned from Portugal, with the remains of his grandson, to receive his last sigh. Here I was joined by my friend Woodville ; and the pleasure his unexpected visit gave me, was heightened by its enabling me to make inquiries after you. As soon as the marquis was interred, we set off for the house of Mr. Falkland, in Essex, where we supposed you were. Mrs. Falkland received us

alone, and notwithstanding our having formerly known her, with the utmost coolness. She told us, in a manner that excited a sudden alarm in my heart, which my firm reliance on your truth and constancy, however, made me almost instantly dismiss, that you had left her some weeks before, in a strange and sudden manner; that she had not heard any thing about you since that period; and that the day after your departure, a gentleman, who would not reveal his name, and took great pains to conceal his person, had been to inquire after you. From her house we proceeded to that of Mr. Decourcy, in Hertfordshire; but here, instead of obtaining the satisfaction I sought, I found additional cause for uneasiness. I could not doubt, from what the housekeeper said, that the gentleman who had followed you to Beech-Grove, was the same that had been to Mr. Falkland's, to make inquiries concerning you; neither that it was through his means you had given up your intention of going to a residence she had been about procuring for you. Tortured by perplexity, to which the looks of Woodville added, I accompanied him to Mrs. Derwent's house, at Mortlake; here my inquietude was relieved by miss Woodville's informing me she heard you were gone to reside with a lady in Lancashire, whose address, she said, she had accidentally learned, and now gave me. Thither Woodville and I posted; but Oh! how impossible to paint the agonies I felt, when I found you had never been there; and learned from the old lady, to whom with difficulty I obtained admission, that she knew no such person, and had merely permitted your letters to be directed to her house, to oblige lord Gwytherin, her relation. Strong,

however, as appearances were against you, I did not readily (so great is the confidence of real love) yield to the suspicions they inspired; till Woodville, in order, as he hoped, to terminate all further anxiety about you, explicitly informed me, from the conduct he had witnessed at Beech-Grove, he was not in the least surprised at what he heard, and fully convinced me you were unworthy of my esteem...a conviction I was compelled to admit, from the particulars he related to me."

"Surely," said Eglantine, here interrupting him, with astonishment in her looks, "you never could have received the letter I entrusted to miss Woodville for you?"

"Never," replied Egbert, "she basely kept back not only the letter you left with her for me, but the one you addressed to her brother; and to their detention was owing the misery I so long endured...a misery which only those like me, who have known what it is to dote, yet doubt...suspect, yet strongly love, can form an adequate idea of."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Eglantine, "what could have tempted her to act so basely?"

"Envy!" replied Egbert. "The superiority of your charms; but still more, the friendship Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy entertained for you, which she thought militated against her interest, made her detest you, and wish to behold you lessened in the estimation of the world. She perceived, on her brother's return from Beech-Grove, that he was displeased with you; but on what account she could not discover, though she practised all her efforts to try and do so. Woodville generously determined never to divulge any thing

which could injure you, while there was a hope of your being able to vindicate yourself, and such a hope he was inclined to entertain, in consequence of a letter you wrote to him from Beech-Grove, but which he was too angry with you, for your supposed levity, to answer. The letters you consigned to miss Woodville's care, she doubted not, would reveal to her the secret she panted to know; in defiance, therefore, of every principle of honour, she opened and perused them. The consequences which could scarcely fail of resulting from their suppression, instantly occurred to her, and stimulated her to destroy them, relying upon her own ingenuity to extricate herself from any difficulty, her having done so, might hereafter draw upon her. But to this measure she was prompted not more by envy than ambition. About the time you visited her at Mortlake, a rumour prevailed of the death of lord Augustus, and the marquis's intention of recalling me to England; and could I be brought to think ill of you, she flattered herself, from the intimacy subsisting between her brother and me, she might by degrees insinuate herself so far into my regard, as to lead me to offer her my hand, and thus elevate herself to the rank she was always ambitious of attaining."

"How severely the conduct of his sister must have wounded the heart of Woodville!" said Eglantine.

"Severely indeed," replied Egbert. "She is a proof of the mischiefs which result from placing young people under the care of those who are not perfectly amiable. Had she been brought up by Mrs. Decourcy, instead of Mrs. Derwent, she might have been an ornament to her sex; for

virtues, as Addison justly observes, are as catching as vices; and, as barren land may, by proper cultivation, at length bring forth good fruit...so, by proper correction and advice, a wayward disposition may, at length, be rendered capable of generous actions. But to proceed in my narrative. We returned from Lancashire to Mortlake; and now miss Woodville explicitly informed me, that it was rumoured, and generally believed, that you had eloped to some obscure retreat with lord Gwytherin. I shall not tire you by dwelling upon the pains I took to discover this retreat. I panted for revenge, and my not being able to obtain it, heightened my wretchedness; this wretchedness was so great, that life was often a burden to me. My friend Woodville watched over me with the greatest anxiety and tenderness; and imagining the gaiety of the metropolis might in some degree dissipate my thoughts, he forced me to it, from a distant country residence of Mrs. Derwent, to which with him, upon her going thither, I had received an invitation. In this visit to the metropolis, I saw you at the play. Oh heaven! even now I tremble to think of the feelings I experienced on beholding you in company with a woman of infamous description; for such the gentleman who accompanied me to the theatre informed me your companion was."

"Ah! then," said Egglantine, "Mrs. Saville did not deceive me, when she said you saw and shunned me."

"She did not indeed," replied Egbert. "After some minutes of irresolution, I left the theatre, fearful lest, if I longer continued in it, I might be led into some action which would draw upon me general observation. I found Woodville,

whom a particular engagement had prevented from accompanying me thither, at home ; in vain he attempted to sooth my agonies. I was in a state of madness, and instantly left town, to avoid the chance of again meeting you. I returned to the house of Mrs. Derwent, though why, I know not, for inclination, I am sure, did not lead me thither ; and Woodville, whom important business detained in town, promised to follow in a few days. It was at this period he met you, and received an explanation, which removed every suspicion he had ever entertained against you, from his mind ; rendered you more estimable than ever in his opinion, and convinced him that some treachery had been practised. This, your mentioning the letters you had entrusted to his sister, gave him a clue to trace ; and he trembled to think of my being exposed to her blandishments, while my mind was in a ferment, and my anguish so great, that I scarcely cared what action I committed. To the apprehensions which started in his mind, was owing his abrupt departure from you, and the mysterious language he used. The moment he quitted you, he set out for Mrs. Derwent's, regardless of his own concerns, in his anxiety to save me from further, or still greater misery than I then experienced. Ere he reached the house of Mrs. Derwent, however, I had left it. I accidentally learned from a gentleman, whom I met at it, that lord Gwytherin was in France ; and I, with

“ Wings as swift

“ As meditation or the thoughts of love.”

hastened to take revenge ; but ere I arrived at the town where I was informed his lordship resided, ample vengeance had been taken on his

crimes: he fell in a duel with a young officer, whose sister he attempted to seduce."

"Unhappy man!" said Eglantine, inexpressibly shocked to hear of his fate. "How dreadful the idea of his being cut off, with all his crimes upon his head!"

"Dreadful indeed," replied Egbert; "but remember, it was those crimes which provoked that fate. In the town where I expected to meet him, extreme fatigue and agitation threw me into a fever. Here Woodville overtook me, and brought with him such tidings as restored me to health, to life, to happiness. He extorted from his sister, who found it in vain to deny it, a full confession of her baseness, and left her overwhelmed with shame and confusion. His eagerness to follow me to France, prevented him from paying his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Decourcy, who, about this time, returned to England; but he terminated their anxiety about you, by enclosing to them your last welcome letter from Scotland: with them, I hope, he will soon partake of our joy. Of my destiny Mrs. Decourcy was ignorant at the time she wrote; but ere this she is acquainted with it, as Woodville staid behind for the express purpose of waiting upon her and Mr. Decourcy."

In the course of this happy day, which terminated all the anxiety of Eglantine, she wrote to her beloved friend Mrs. Decourcy, requesting her, Mr. Decourcy, and Woodville, to hasten immediately to Endermay castle. The invitation was accepted, and two days after their arrival, Egbert and Eglantine were united. The rejoicings which took place on this occasion, were not such as mere ostentation dictated, but such as sprung from love and tenderness; every one seemed interested

in, and every one seemed to rejoice at the happiness of, the youthful pair.

“Oh my children !” said lord Endermay, in the course of this day, which gave to him a son, rich in every virtue, “how forcibly does your story inculcate the usefulness of patience, resignation, and fortitude ! It is by the exertion of those estimable qualities, you have ultimately attained your present felicity. Had you yielded to despair ....had you, by so doing, withdrawn your confidence from Heaven, you would, no doubt, have sunk beneath the burdens which oppressed you ; but, by struggling against adversity, you have conquered it, and proved, that those who exert their own strength, are still supported. They who rely for succour upon the Almighty, are never disappointed.”

Little more now remains for us to say, than to give some account of the other characters introduced into this work. Of lord Gwytherin and lady Dunsane we have already spoken. The former fell a victim to his vices, and the latter, in the solitude of a convent, too late permitted herself to be convinced, that the winding paths of dissimulation ever end in shame and sorrow.

The giddy and unfeeling Gertrude, who had been led by vanity alone to unite herself to Mr. Polworth, at length suffered herself to be seduced into guilt, by the insinuating tenderness of captain Bellamy. The eyes of her husband, which her artifices had completely blinded, were soon opened by the friends of his daughter, and he immediately sought legal redress for his injuries. Ere this, however, could be obtained, Gertrude died, of grief for the desertion of her seducer, and the infamy with which she found herself overwhelmed.

The affliction of her almost distracted mother, who, notwithstanding her conduct, would not separate herself from her, was increased by the idea of having merited it, not more from the improper education she had given to her, than from her own disobedience to the last commands of her husband, and her inhumanity to the innocent and distressed Eglantine. She was indeed, by this dreadful stroke, humbled to the dust, and owned, with tears, the justness of the punishment.

Eglantine (who never mentioned the cruelty she had experienced from her to the Decourcys, well knowing the irreparable injury it would be to her to have it known, and who had long since forgiven it) never rested, on hearing of the death of Gertrude, till she discovered the obscure retreat to which her unfortunate mother had retired to hide her miseries.

At first the unhappy woman shrunk from beholding her ; but, by degrees, her gentle pity was so soothing to her lacerated heart, that she hailed her presence as she would have done that of a ministering angel, and next to Heaven, looked up to her for support and consolation.

Thus did Eglantine, by the comfort she afforded her, and the services she united with the Decourcys in rendering to her family, gratify the benevolent feelings of her heart, and evince the gratitude she felt for the kindnesses experienced from Mr. Greville, the father, the friend, and protector of her early youth.

Lord Dunsane, who came over to England, for the express purpose of proposing for Eglantine, returned to France on hearing of her engagement, where, by calling reason to his aid, he soon triumphed over his hopeless passion, and, in the

course of time, married a very amiable lady, with whom he enjoyed all the felicity he merited.

Miss Woodville profited by the shame she felt at the detection of her baseness ; and, by a strict adherence in future to truth and integrity, regained her former place in the esteem of her brother, and was at length happy in an alliance with a man of worth.

Woodville, attached to domestic happiness, soon followed the example of Egbert, and was as happy in his choice of a wife, as he had been in that of a friend.

Egbert and Eglantine, as amiable in prosperity as in adversity, were, as lord Endermay had wished them to be, a blessing to one another and to all connected with them.

Their time was principally divided between Endermay and Methwold castles ; in the former of which lord and lady Endermay continued to reside, blessed by beholding the happiness of those most dear to them.

“ One bright gleam  
“ Of setting life shone on their evening hours :  
“ Not less enraptur'd than the happy pair,  
“ Who flourish'd long in tender bliss, and rear'd  
“ A numerous offspring, lovely like themselves,  
“ And good, the grace of all the country round.”

THOMSON.

THE END.

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ed over his hopeless



